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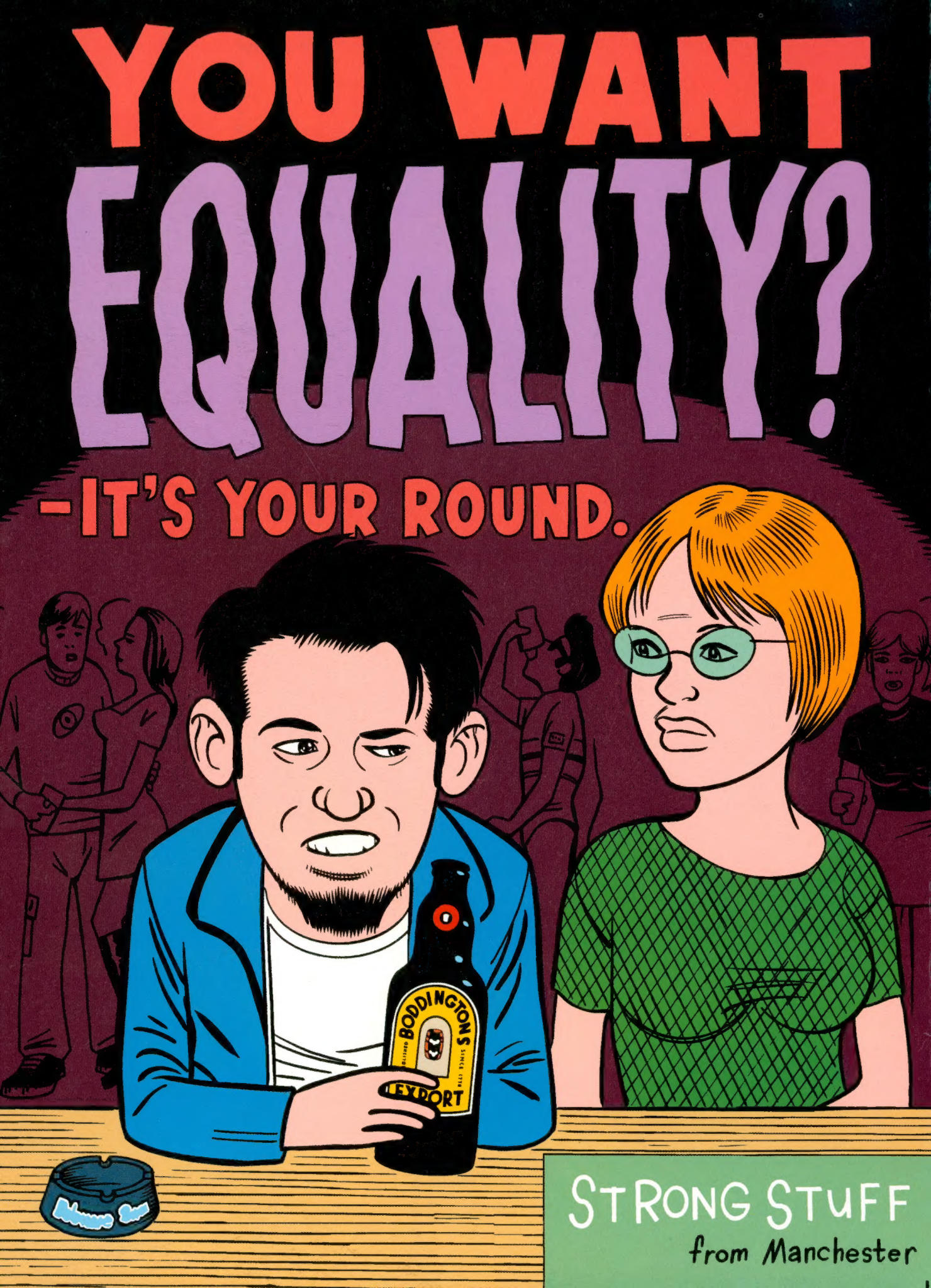
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Inside

FORGET GOING TO THE PUB...

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MATT BIELBY, EDITOR

Big changes are coming to *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, in the form of a certain commanding, rather short-tempered, Klingon warrior. Read about this, and the rest of the new US TV season, on page 18...

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News from across the globe, including the answer to the question everyone's asking: How many Hugo awards *did* Langford get this year?

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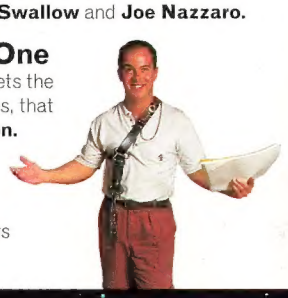
What's new with *Voyager*? How will *The X-Files* develop in year three? Who's the new captain on *seaQuest DSV*? And isn't that tall, pony-tailed chap docking at *Deep Space Nine* awfully familiar looking?

Find out the answers to all these questions – plus previews of brand new shows like *American Gothic* and *Space: Above and Beyond* – in this issue's massive round-up of the US TV SF. Plus! This 23-page spectacular features interviews with the likes of Michael Dorn and *Star Trek: Voyager* producer Jeri Taylor. By **Jim Swallow** and **Joe Nazzaro.**

52 Judge Dredd on Radio One
Mega City One's premier lawman at last gets the dramatic adaptation he deserves. (And, yes, that means we think it's good.) By **MJ Simpson.**



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One of the greatest living British SF writers talks to an awe-struck **MJ Simpson**.

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Perhaps the most famous *Doctor Who* companion of all takes tea with an impressed **Dave Golder**.

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Brian Hughes

STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES FROM THE MANY WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION, FROM VR TROOPERS TO BORIS VALLEJO, FROM WEIRD HOME-GROWN ROBOT-CRITTERS FIGHTING EACH OTHER TO SPECIES DIRECTOR ROGER DONALDSON. PLUS, OUR FIRST FANZINE REVIEWS AND, OF COURSE, THE UBIQUITOUS PRODUCTION HELL...

This month in Strange Tales...

SPOOKY!

It's a good story, whatever year it is: *Species* director Roger Donaldson talks gore, finding beautiful young actresses and *A for Andromeda* on **page 6**.

WEIRD!

The world over, people are coming out and admitting they like *Power Rangers* and its sister show *VR Troopers*. Producer Bob Hughes explains why on **page 10**.

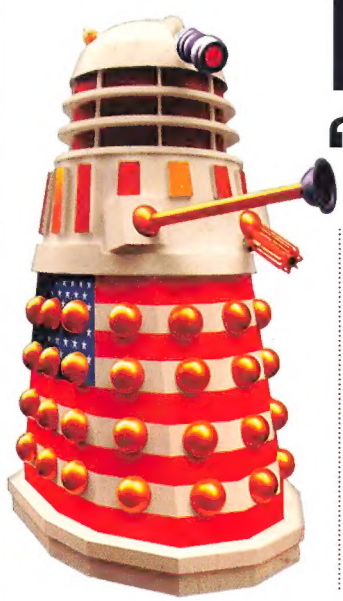
TARTAN!

There were plenty of new fantasy shows – some of them very odd indeed – on display at the recent Edinburgh film festival. Read our report on **page 14**.

SFX Top Tens

To celebrate the re-arrival of the good Doctor, here are our favourite nonsense tale titles from the BBC's 26-season run of *Doctor Who*. See if you can work out what each story's about just from the name...

10. **Logopolis** Actually: A town where matter is created by monks mumbling computations.
9. **Kinda** Actually: Pink snake invades Tegan's mind.
8. **The Masque of Mandragora** Actually: Evil energy escapes to Italy.
7. **Castrovalva** Actually: Escher-inspired planet created by the Master.
6. **Shada** Actually: Incomplete prison planet affair.
5. **The Claws of Axos** Actually: No claws – Axos is a spaghetti monster, and so has tentacles instead.
4. **Mawdryn Undead** Actually: Title means "dead undead" in Welsh.
3. **The Macra Terror** Actually: Giant crab in holiday camp; hardly terrifying.
2. **Meglos** Actually: Tom Baker turns into a cactus.
1. **Delta and the Bannermen** Actually: More Wales, more holiday camps. But at least the "Bannermen" actually carry banners. Good for them!



Doctor Who "Six times a year!"

At last! The US version of *Doctor Who* is under way, writes **Dave Golder**...

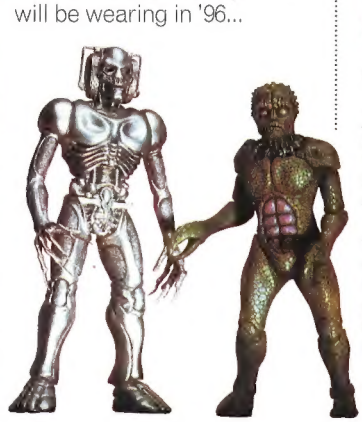
Good news for *Doctor Who* fans: The BBC and Universal could produce up to *six* two-hour *Doctor Who* telemovies a year if the pilot show succeeds, says the show's executive producer, Philip Segal.

Speaking at the recent Edinburgh TV festival, Segal said the companies were already discussing further *Who*s to follow their first effort, due to start filming soon. Principal photography on the $5 million (£3.1 million) pilot film begins on 20 November, according to Segal, with a broadcast date set for next February on the Fox network in the US – no BBC date as yet. Indeed, a BBC spokesperson told SFX that the corporation still hasn't approved the script, and that Segal was just "hiking up" excitement over the project...

Other stumbling blocks: No Doctor has been cast, and despite newspaper reports, it's unlikely to be Simon Callow. Rumours of Roddy McDowell should also be taken with a pinch of salt. Indeed, all we do know is that Segal says the story will be partly set in San Francisco. Daleks sweeping through Chinatown, anyone?

New look for Who monsters

Dave Golder takes a look at what the trendiest *Who* foes will be wearing in '96...



The Cybermen and Ice Warriors – two of the most popular *Doctor Who* monsters – are set to get a complete makeover in Bill Baggs' next independent *Who*-based video project, *Sentinel*.

Redesigned by Chris Fitzgerald of Jim Henson's Creature Shop, the new monsters look remarkably similar to the designs drawn up for the BBC's ill-fated *Doctor Who* 30th anniversary story, "The Dark Dimension."

"That's because Chris worked on the designs for 'The Dark Dimension'," explains Baggs, the producer/director of assorted *Who* spin-offs, including the acclaimed Colin Baker-starring *Stranger* series of videos. "But these models are new ones made especially for *Sentinel*.

"Actually," he adds, archly, "the new Cybermen were first designed for a project even earlier than 'The Dark Dimension.' Er, but I'm not exactly sure what it was."

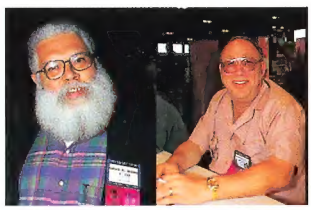
The script for the story – originally titled "The Return of the Cybermen," but changed when the Ice Warriors were added to the plot – has been written by Nick Briggs, also of *Stranger* fame. Described as, "an exciting action adventure," it's currently going through rewrites.

"We want to make sure that the script is exactly right before we start filming," explains Baggs. Meanwhile, he also has the second video in a new *Who*-related series, *PROBE*, in preparation. The first *PROBE* video, "The Devil of Winterbourne," starred ex-fifth Doctor Peter Davison, Louise (Leela) Jameson and Caroline (Liz Shaw) John, and sold very well. Indeed, the second *PROBE* story may shoot before *Sentinel*. It just depends which script Baggs is happy with first...

"So, a Brit actually won something...?"

SHOCK AND CONFUSION AT THE 1995 HUGO AWARDS

Since 1958, the Science Fiction Achievement Awards have been known as the Hugos. They're the SF world's Oscars, and – like the Oscars – often Americans win them. **MJ Simpson** reports...



Samuel R Delaney (left) got to present a Hugo award, while Mike Resnick (right) got to take one home...

The Hugos are named after legendary SF editor Hugo Gernsback (1884-1967), who, in 1926, founded *Amazing Stories*, the first true SF magazine (he received a Special Committee Award for his efforts in 1960). It is, it has to be said, quite a relief that *Amazing Stories* was never edited by, say, multiple short fiction winner Spider Robinson...

The Hugos were first awarded at the 1953 World SF Convention, disappeared, reappeared in 1955 and have been awarded at the Worldcon every year since. The record for most Hugos – which are awarded in a number of different categories, not just for fiction – is held by US trade mag *Locus*, which has won 17 (Best Fanzine in 1971, '72, '76, '78, and '80-'83, and Best Semiprozine, 1984-1992!). You'll see how many different categories there actually are as we go through the list of this year's winners, but a few of the main ones demand some explanation. According to Hugo, a novel is over 40,000 words long, a novella is 17,500 to 40,000 words, a novelette is 7,500 to 17,500 words, and a short story is less than 7,500 words – the numbers are kind of arbitrary, but they'll do.

Over the years, the Hugo award has come in for some criticism, normally for the same basic things. The big complaint is that it's voted for by a select group of hardcore fans, who perhaps don't reflect the tastes of the broader SF-reading public. Well, sure – but someone's got to do it, and if the Hugo award committee can be bothered to get off their arses, then why not? Here in the UK, another dissenting voice can sometimes be heard – the Hugos (like the Nebula awards) are too US-centric, and we never win any. This year's results, perhaps reflecting the fact that there were more Brits at Intersection than a normal Worldcon, clearly shows this isn't always the case.

At the last British Worldcon, Conspiracy in 1987, there were four UK winners (David Langford, Jim Burns, *Ansible* and *Trillion Year Spree*). This year there were five – or six if you include the John W Campbell award, which is associated, but not actually a Hugo. Not a bad showing for the home team. SFX extends congrats to all the winners, and hopes nobody else got too upset. There's always next year...

Jeff Noon: No Hugo, as such, but he did walk off with the John W Campbell. Nice work, fella!

The Hugo Award Winners 1995

THIS YEAR, SPECTACULAR (AND, AS MANY COMMENTED, WORRYINGLY PHALLIC) HUGO AWARDS – THE DESIGN CHANGES EACH YEAR, BUT IS ALWAYS A VARIATION ON THE ROCKET-SHIP STANDING UPRIGHT ON ITS FINS IDEA – WENT TO...

Best Novel: Mirror Dance *by Lois McMaster Bujold (Baen)*
An unprecedented three Best Novel Hugos in five years for Ms Bujold, who also won in 1991 and 1992. Only Heinlein has won the award more times.

Best Novella: Seven Views of Olduvai Gorge *by Mike Resnick (in F&SF, Oct/Nov '94)*
A third Hugo for Resnick, who won Best Short Story in 1989 and Best Novelette in 1991. Surprisingly, his 1980 novel Battlestar Galactica 5: Galactica Discovers Earth *was never actually nominated...*

Best Novelette: The Martian Child *by David Gerrold (in F&SF, Sep '94)*
A first Hugo for an author whose first professional sale was the Star Trek *script "The Trouble With Tribbles."*

Best Short Story: None So Blind *by Joe Haldeman (in Asimov's, Nov '94)*
Haldeman last won the short story Hugo in 1977 with Tricentennial.

Best Non-Fiction Book: I, Asimov: A Memoir *by Isaac Asimov (Doubleday)*
A post-humous award for the autobiography of "The Good Doctor." Ike also won Hugos for: The Gods Themselves *(Best Novel, 1973),* The Bicentennial Man *(Best Novelette, 1977),* Gold *(Best Novelette, post-humous award, 1992) and the* Foundation *series (Best All-Time Series, special award, 1966).*

Best Dramatic Presentation: *"All Good Things" (the final* Star Trek: TNG *TV episode), written by Ronald D Moore & Brannon Braga, directed by Ronald D Moore.*
Probably more of a vote for Star Trek: The Next Generation *as a whole than for the actual show – though it was a good one. "The Inner Light" episode won in 1993, as did two "classic" shows: "The Menagerie" (1967) and "City on the Edge of Forever" (1968).*

Best Professional Editor: *Gardner Dozois*
Dozois is editor of the annual Year's Best SF *anthology; he won this Hugo every year from 1988-93!*

Best Professional Artist: *Jim Burns*
Jim's previous Hugo was at Conspiracy in 1987, when he was Guest of Honour. His distinctive style remains popular with both publishers and readers: Check out Colin Greenland's Plenty *books, for example.* (And our interview with him on page 13 – Ed.)

Best Original Artwork: Lady Cottington's Pressed Fairy Book *(Turner/Pavilion)*
*Brian Froud's paintings, supported by Terry (*Monty Python*) Jones' text, are not only well-executed (literally!) but funny and original.*

Best Semi Prozine: Interzone
At last! Britain's longest running – and for much of its life, only – magazine of science fiction finally gets a well-deserved Hugo as it approaches its 100th issue. Hearty congrats to David Pringle and his dedicated team.

Hurrah for "All Good Things!" It kept the much fancied *Stargate* from a Hugo!

Best Fanzine: Ansible
Mr Langford's monthly one-sheet is also approaching issue 100. No SF fan should be without this news-and-gossip zine, which also won a Hugo in 1987.

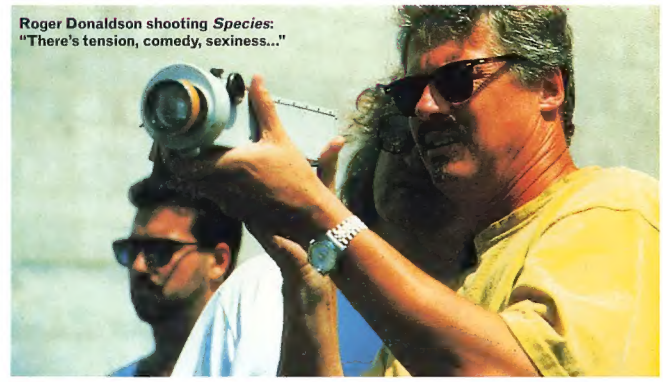
Best Fan Writer: *David Langford*
Yet again! Seventh year running, David has won more Best Fan Writer Hugos than anybody ever and, drat it, deserved them all.

Best Fan Artist: *Teddy Harvia*
Another Hugo for Harvia, to go with the 1991 award.

John W Campbell Award: *Jeff Noon*
Not actually a Hugo, this is awarded to the best new SF writer and is sponsored by the publishers of Analog. *The first winner, in 1973, was Jerry Pournelle. Top marks to the lad from Manchester!*

Origins of Species

Roger Donaldson, director of the spine-ripping, thumb-snipping SF/horror crossbreed that is *Species*, talks HR Giger, *A for Andromeda*, and not being a wuss with **Matt Bielby**...



Roger Donaldson shooting *Species*: "There's tension, comedy, sexiness..."

"The idea was to minimise the gore," says Roger Donaldson, director of *No Way Out*, *The Bounty*, *Cocktail*, and now the year's surprise SF/horror hit, *Species* – a film where tongues smash through skulls, thumbs are cut from hands and spines are ripped bodily from unsuspecting loo-goers. It's not the nastiest film in the world by any means, but I'd hate to imagine what *maximising* it would have been like...

"Well," he rethinks, "all right. I *wanted* to minimise it, but when it was there I didn't want to be a complete wuss. The nastiest bit is probably where the tongue goes right through the guy's head, though the actual shot is very short. You know Sil, the alien girl, is going to do something terrible to this guy, but you're not sure what."

"He's a very opinionated guy is Giger – he knows what he likes and doesn't like, but he doesn't necessarily have the answers..."

Roger Donaldson, director

"I wanted a real ensemble cast," says Donaldson of his monster-chasers. "All grade A actors, but no real superstars."

Species is the story of this Sil, a human-alien crossbreed grown in a test-tube thanks to instructions beamed to Earth from some far-off planet. She grows from adolescence to adulthood in a matter of days, escapes from the government labs where she was created, and sets out to fulfil her destiny on the streets of LA. Her prime directive seem to be to propagate her species – along the way turning into a gruesome alien monster when she feels the need to to rip apart anyone who gets in her way...

The first actor cast was Michael Madsen, seen left with Ben Kingsley. "Mike and Ben are the opposite ends of the acting spectrum," says Donaldson, "this shuffling method actor, and this precise RSC guy."

One centrepiece of *Species* is its effects, shown in great detail towards the end of the film. They've been designed by HR Giger, which begs comparison with a certain SF classic...

"Sure," Donaldson admits. "But the only real connection between this movie and *Alien* is Giger. Otherwise, they're very different. When I first came on board, I realised we need someone good to design the monster – and I've got a son who's crazy about comic books, so I got him to take me to a comic store in Santa Monica. I went through all the fantasy art books there and found a couple that interested me, one of which was by Giger. Only later did I discover he did *Alien*. At first I didn't realise it was the same guy!"

When we spoke to Giger last issue, he said he liked *Species*, but – at the risk of ruining it for those who have yet to see the film – was disappointed you chose to kill the monster off with fire. Did he tell you he didn't like the ending at the time?

"Yeah, he did. He's a very opinionated guy. He knows what he likes and doesn't like, but he doesn't necessarily have the answers. He just says he doesn't like something, but not why – which, when you're shooting, doesn't help much. But sure, we could have played the ending of *Species* in different ways. We could easily have had a *King Kong*-type ending, for instance, where you feel

Forest Whitaker plays an empath in *Species* (above); putting the finishing touches to Sil's alien cocoon (right).

sorry for the creature, rather than, you know, you're glad it's dead."

A lot of people have likened *Species* to the early '60's British TV show, *A for Andromeda,* co-written by astronomer/SF writer Fred Hoyle. In that, too, a set of signals are picked up from space, where they enable the Earth scientists to build a super-computer, and then to create life – an embryo which grows rapidly into a beautiful young woman. It's almost identical, isn't it?

"I've never heard of that!" he exclaims with genuine surprise, "but I think, with science fiction particularly, there are a lot of rules the audience expects you to follow, so it's hard to come up with stuff that's never been seen anywhere before..."

Species has done very well in America. Why d'you think that is?

"It's hard to say, but I think people found it entertaining ultimately. I think they found it scary, funny and sexy. It certainly surprised the studio – they were expecting *Species* to do almost exactly half the business it eventually did."

A for Andromeda launched the career of one Julie Christie, and now *Species* looks like doing the same for Natasha Henstridge. Where exactly did you find her?

"I knew I wanted the creature to start off very sympathetic, so as the film goes on your feelings slowly move from her to the people chasing her. I wanted her to be beautiful, but I didn't want it to be the sort of beauty that can, you know, piss the audience off. You don't want them thinking, 'Here we go, another babe in a movie.' And I wanted someone who didn't have a high profile, but who could act – with some help, at least. It was a bit of a gamble to go with her, and the studio was a little nervous. To be honest, she was the last person I cast – it was 'Right, we've got to get someone, we're shooting next week!'"

She certainly does well – I sided with her almost all the way through, right up until the end...

"What happened was I'd seen a documentary about a kid who'd been kept in a cupboard or something by her parents, and it was about how she started to learn about the world at quite an advanced age. I wanted that sort of wonderment for Sil – she's like a sponge who takes everything in, and interprets it all literally. She's smart, but not really evil – killing people is just her instinct, like a wild animal. If she's trying to mate and someone interrupts her, she'll kill. That's all there is to it."

A lot of that comes across in the movie, but the script is still very vague about why she's on earth, and what actually motivates her...

"I actually liked the fact that the script didn't give all the answers. The point of view of this movie is the point of view of the human characters – you don't know where she's come from, or who she is. She doesn't know – she's just here. I liked that unknown quantity to the story."

One part of the story that's certainly an "unknown quantity" are the dream sequences. What, for instance, was that bit with the Giger-esque train all about...?

"The dreams throughout the piece are snippets of her thoughts," says Donaldson, "but, like with any art, it's hard to say exactly what they mean. With the train, you see it – and hopefully it has an impact on you, and fits into the movie – but it's for you to interpret what it means."

Are you a science fiction fan?

"I love science fiction, but as a film-maker there's no sort of film I'm more keen on than any other – if I reeled out my favourite movies it would be everything from *My Life as a Dog* to *Alien* to *The Ladykillers*. I love *2001* – and that Russian one, *Solaris*. But it's a big range..."

Species ends in a very open way – almost begging for a sequel. If that happens, will you be involved again?

"Well, we didn't make the film assuming a sequel," he smiles, "but the sequel's there – and there's plenty to make it from. I came to *Species* looking for something a little different – I'd never done any special effects before, and that was something I was interested in trying, but I've done it now... I'd only do a sequel if it was different enough...."

Species *is showing now, and reviewed on page 76.*

The lady killer

Few models-turned-actresses get a chance to star in a big-budget SF/horror movie alongside the likes of Ben Kingsley and Michael Madsen. Still, Matt Bielby can see what the makers of *Species* saw in Natasha Henstridge...

It could have been a disaster. Sure, some good actresses have come out of modelling, but they seem more the exception than the rule. That newcomer Natasha Henstridge – ex-of the Paris and New York catwalks – should therefore acquit herself quite so well in *Species* makes for a pleasant surprise...

You can understand the casting. In the flesh, Natasha's not unlike an alien creature herself. Impossibly tall, she seems to have come from another world – the planet of the beautiful people...

I take it people recognise you more in the street now?

"Oh, sure. I get spotted a lot, especially as the movie's been out in the States for a while. It can be kind of fun – some people actually run in the other direction! I had this little girl the other day, and she was just staring at me, so I started staring back. And eventually she said – it's you, you're Sil. And I went, 'Yeaaaah...' She looked real scared!"

It's a good job you're married, because guys wouldn't come near you now! They'd be scared your breasts would start shooting out tentacles like they do in *Species*...

"I know! Pretty funny, huh?"

(Oh yeah, you didn't realise? Sadly, Natasha – only 21 – is married to Damian Chapa, the guy who played Ken in the *Street Fighter* movie. So he's likely to be able to kick your head in. There's the breaks, huh?)

Speaking of breaks, Natasha got a pretty good one. LA must be packed with actresses who'd have killed for her role in *Species*. How'd you manage to land it...?

"There were obviously certain physical things they were looking for," she smiles, "and Roger told me he liked my eyes – that they're very expressive, and that I was very directable. I got better and better with each audition."

Was it scary, going from having done no real acting at all to a big role like this?

"Yeah, but when I read the script I thought, I can definitely do this. There're some similarities between me and Sil, like the dual personality thing – and the way she's so innocent and instinctual. She was never really evil. When she kills people at the end of the film she's doing it to protect her baby..."

Seeing *Species,* you can hardly fail to notice Natasha spends a fair amount of time fairly kit-free. That can't have been much fun?

"Actually, the nudity wasn't a problem for me, because it was in context. And I don't have much of a problem with it anyway – as a model you get used to it. Admittedly, in a film it's different – you're around a crew of people, and there's the actual motion too, of course. As far as *Species* is concerned, though, I think if there was no nudity, people would be going around saying 'Well, how does she know so much about clothes?'"

Actually, what I was thinking was, how does she know how to drive?

"Well, if you notice, when she gets in the car with the guy she picks up at the club, she checks out how he does it! And she's quick – she's smart enough to pick it up. It's an automatic too, of course..."

So, what's next?

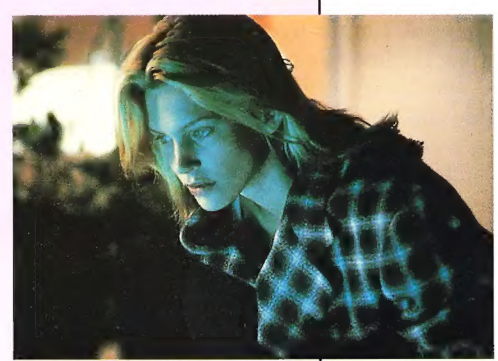
"Well, I already did a film called *Adrenaline,* a cop thing with Christopher Lambert. We team up and chase down this mutant guy in Eastern Europe – it's set in the near future. It'll be out later this year."

So you've done a couple of science fiction movies now. Are you actually a fan?

"Nah, it just happens that I've started in science fiction. The supernatural, the spiritual, and that kind of thing I was always into. But I never liked *Star Trek*. *Adrenaline* isn't actually that science fictiony, except that it's set in the year 2008."

So you're an actress now, not a model?

"Oh, definitely. Ben Kingsley and Roger are saying, 'Don't rush, Natasha, wait for the right thing,' and I'm like, 'I want to do a movie!' That said, if a huge cosmetics contract came along it'd be, like, 'Yes! Take me please!' I could handle going back to modelling for something like that a few days a year..."



Natasha: "The aliens are *really* sneaky..."

"I think if there was no nudity, people would be saying, 'Well, how does she [Sil] know so much about clothes?'"

Natasha Henstridge, alias Sil

"Don't quote us!"

In *Superman: The New Movie,* Superman is to get seriously injured – almost killed – in a storyline similar to the recent "Doomsday" *Superman* comics. He's put into cryogenic suspension until a time when he can repaired, and eventually wakes up in the Metropolis of the future. The problem? Something happened in the past that's ruined the world. He's obviously got to go back and fix it – but how?

In Stanley Kubrick's long awaited *AI* – short for "artificial intelligence" – a second Ice Age has occurred, and the remaining humans live on mechanised icebergs, tended over by robot drones. The trouble is, the computer controlling them's broken down – and now the metal ones' desire to clean everything includes their human bosses, from the inside out! Yeuch! Expect gory effects galore from Rick *(American Werewolf in London)* Baker.

Waterworld 2 – suggested, amazingly, ever since it turned out that the first film wasn't quite as terrible as some brutal cynics had hoped – is still highly unlikely to happen, but a cartoon series is definitely on the cards. Apparently, it'll tell the background story about the ice caps melting, and how the Waterworld was originally formed...

The Avengers movie is still going ahead, and starring Patrick Macnee – for the first five minutes. Then he gets mysteriously killed, and at his funeral all the guests turn out to be his old companions – from Honor Blackman to Joanna Lumley – plus his son and Mrs Peel's daughter. The young couple – currently touted to be played by Hugh and Liz! – then have to try and find out which old *Avengers* baddy did Steed in. The trouble is, should they get romantically involved – or are they (gulp!) really brother and sister?

Two *Babylon 5* big screen movies are in the pipeline once the fifth – and last – season of the TV series has been aired (assuming it goes the distance, of course). They will, it's said, tell the final story of the war with the Shadows...

Talkin' Tolkien

As the BBC prepares to release a 14-CD box set of its Radio 4 adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings,* **Dave Golder** talks to the series' producer, Jane Morgan...

"What was good about it was that it appealed to people who didn't really like the book – I think we did old Tolkien proud." So reckons Jane Morgan, the producer who brought JRR Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* to Radio 4 back in 1981, and in the process created what many now regard as the definitive adaptation. A mammoth production for the time, it translated the events of *The Fellowship of the Ri ng, The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King* into 26 half-hour episodes, and featured the voices of such noted thesps as Ian Holm and Michael Horden.

A hugely popular success, the series was released on audio cassette several years ago, but is only now being made available on CD. Aimed squarely at the serious collector – it costs £79.95! – the new limited edition box set comprises 14 discs, a map of Middle Earth and a special 24-page booklet.

Who could forget the march of the Ents? Radio 4's classic dramatisation of *The Lord of the Rings* is now available on CD.

But it isn't *exactly* the same version that was originally broadcast, admits Morgan: "I re-edited the series after it first went out. In the half-hour format we tried to keep all the strands going so that there was a lot of 'meanwhile, back at Mordor' stuff. Afterwards, we thought we should have stuck more to Tolkien's scheme."

Fortunately for Morgan, when the BBC repeated the series, it obligingly provided an hour-long slot, which then enabled her to go back and reshuffle things: "It was easier when we went to the hour-long episodes to stay with Frodo and Sam for a long periods of time. I do think it's the better version."

The new version also placed more emphasis on the acting: "I think in the scenes between Sam and Frodo we actually *improved* on Tolkien, who didn't develop the relationship."

And when it came to casting, Morgan found herself in an almost unique situation: "I've never had such luck! Nearly everybody was my first choice! I never wanted anybody but Ian Holm for Frodo. In the episode in which Frodo throws the ring into the Crack of Doom, he was superb. We were all in tears in the recording booth, but he dashed in and said, 'I've got another idea, let me have another go.' He did it again, and he played it this time very much more in the voice of Gollum. And it was brilliant.

"I tried to cast it so that most of the time the voices didn't have to be treated. David Collings had a fruity tone for the Elf, while David Livingstone was a suitably gruff dwarf..."

And the music was vital to the series' success too, wasn't it?

"I didn't want to have grittily realistic battles. I wanted the music to do a lot of the work. Also, for the journey elements, music is a great way of evoking movement. I had to listen to all sorts of modern composers and eventually I came upon Steven Oliver, who I was convinced was the right person for the job."

> **"I didn't want to have grittily realistic battles. I wanted the music to do a lot of the work. Also, for the journey elements, music is a great way of evoking movement."**
>
> Jane Morgan, producer

Not everything went according to plan, though. "I remember when we did the Battle at Helm's Deep," recalls Morgan. "We had one go at doing it and it was dreadful. We fell about with laughter, it was so awful. So we totally re-conceived it. We put a pulse into the music, and I asked the actors to play it in a much more minimalist way. Then the whole thing just fused. There's a tendency for people to just shout in 'big' scenes in a radio play, and that's usually a bad idea."

Morgan, currently a freelance producer of radio shows and audio books, still has one major grievance to voice though: "I don't think it won a single award. How Ian Holm didn't receive recognition for his performance utterly baffles me..."

Introducing The Z-Files

(Well, it had to happen...)

When Steve Punt and Hugh Dennis – ex-Cambridge Footlights, ex-*Mary Whitehouse Experience* – returned to TV this year as simply *Punt & Dennis*, a regular feature of their series was a filmed parody of a cult TV show. Three shows attacked in the series were SF affairs – so working out what *The Z-Files* was taking the mick out of shouldn't be too hard. **MJ Simpson** talks to producer Caroline Leddy...

Oh, my sides! Punt & Dennis did skits on *Bugs* (with *Brookie*'s Anna Friel) and *The X-Files* (below).

"Steve and Hugh are both great fans of science fiction telly," laughs Caroline Leddy, who produced the recent *Punt & Dennis* series with Geoff Miles. "They write their own scripts and so the choice of shows to parody was theirs."

And they went for science fiction with a vengeance. The series kicked off with a spoof called *Plugs;* followed by *The Z-Files*, which saw Punt in drag as the duo lampooned Mulder and Scully. A parody of *Star Trek: TNG* had no title, and conspicuously avoided using the phrase "Star Trek" anywhere.

"We tried to avoid the obvious shows, such as soaps," explains Caroline. "And the hip SF series really lend themselves to this sort of treatment. *Bugs* and *The X-Files* haven't been done before either – though the fact that our *X-Files* parody went out three days before the new series began was just a happy accident!"

Other shows spoofed were *ER, Heartbeat* and *Baywatch*. But while the choice of targets may have been largely original, most of the jokes were, it must be said, pretty creaky: Geordi LaForge walking into walls, for instance, or Scully being attacked by paranormal phenomena behind Mulder's back.

Doing the parodies did have its problems, of course. Caroline and her production team had to be careful not to infringe any copyrights, although spoofing *Bugs* naturally presented no major problems. In fact, *Bugs* star Jaye Griffiths actually appeared in the sketch, in which the team investigated techno-corruption in the National Lottery, and traced the problem back to presenter Gordon Kennedy.

Star Trek, on the other hand, is a closely guarded property of Paramount and Viacom, so the *Punt & Dennis* designers had to be more careful. Steve Punt played Data and Hugh Dennis Picard in the sketch, beaming down to a planet inhabited by a race of Hugh Grants! The lovely Lorelei King (*Fantomcat* and *Judge Dredd: The Radio Series)* played the Beverley Crusher role.

Another famous face appeared in *The Z-Files:* Mac McDonald, (from *Aliens: The Special Edition* and the first episode of *Red Dwarf*). This sketch saw people being attacked by sentient clothing, a criminal plot devised by Mr Motivator.

"The parodies were great fun to do," says Caroline, who started out as a comedienne herself. "Considering that they were shot on film on a small budget, they worked well, and all the guest stars really enjoyed doing it. I think the music (by Jonathan Whitehead) in particular was crucial."

Although the scripts may not have been *that* dangerous, the *X-Files* spoof did produce one piece of genuine satire. The *Z-Files* title sequence replaced the original's fuzzy shots of a UFO with fuzzy shots of a paper plate – and the end result looked remarkably similar!

Continued on page 14

THIS JUST IN...

STOP PRESS! Derek Meddings dies

It's been a sad month for SF fans. First John Brunner dies (see John Grant, page 50), and then – just as this issue of SFX went to press – we learned that we've lost Derek Meddings too. Derek was, of course, *the* man as far as British movie and TV special effects are concerned. He was most famous for his work on Gerry Anderson productions like *Thunderbirds,* of course, but was also well respected for his movie work, the latest of which was the new Bond film, *Goldeneye.* Although he'd suffered from cancer for some years, his death came as a shock to many – those who'd spoken to him only days earlier hadn't realised the seriousness of his condition. He'll be missed.

UFO uncovered!

Fans of Derek Meddings could do a lot worse than join the well organised and professional Gerry Anderson fan club, Fanderson. Why? Well, one reason is because only then can you get your mitts on a great hour-plus video, entitled "The UFO Documentary," which documents the creation of the first live-action Anderson TV show. It features plenty of behind-the-scenes footage, and interviews with most of the people involved – including stars Ed Bishop, Dolores Mantez, George Sewell and Vladek Sheybal, plus Gerry Anderson and Meddings himself. Hopefully the forthcoming *Space: 1999* companion volume will be as good.

For information on joining Fanderson, send an SAE to secretary Nick Williams at: 1 Northway Road, Wick, Littlehampton, West Sussex BN17 7JX.

British fan makes good

Pete Chambers, President of the Alien Nation Appreciation Society, was surprised to discover that in the upcoming *Alien Nation: Millennium* TV movie, his name and mugshot are on the police bulletin board under "Missing Persons"! Since Pete was a prime mover in persuading Fox to

PRODUCTION HELL

(New movie projects currently in that limbo between – hopefully – good idea and finished film...)

Edited by **Steve Holland**

Grab yourself a big pinch of salt – all entries here are accurate at time of going to press, but the film industry is notoriously fickle – and get stuck in. You won't find a more thorough listing of new SF and fantasy film projects in the works anywhere...

http://www.futurenet.co.uk

Key: Dir – Director; Scr – Scriptwriter; ExPrd – Executive Producer; Prd – Producer; St – Starring.

● **ADRENALINE** Natasha Henstridge, star of *Species*, will star as a futuristic cop on the trail of a serial killer.

● **ANGELS OF MERCENARY** Scr/Prd Frederick O'Bryant. A political thriller set in 2215.

● **BATMAN TRIUMPHANT** (Warner) With *Batman Forever* still riding high in the box office charts, Warner has brought the fourth movie forward by a year. Joel Schumacher will be developing the film with *BF* scriptwriter Akiva Goldsman. The two are currently working together on the John Grisham-based *A Time to Kill.* Shooting should begin in Autumn 1996 for a Summer 1997 release; Chris O'Donnell seems committed to return as Robin (he dropped out of *Men in Black* stating that he didn't want to do too many comic-based films in a row). Kilmer will return as *Batman,* and the current hot gossip villains are Mr Freeze and Poison Ivy, with Patrick Stewart and Demi Moore tipped for the roles.

Val Kilmer will be back for *Batman Triumphant*. But who will he fight?

● **THE BOY WITH X-RAY EYES** (Royal Oak Entertainment) No further information.

● **CARRIE 2** (MGM/UA) A sequel to the 1976 Brian DePalma film (based, of course, on the novel by Stephen King) is in development. It's being scripted by Rafael *(Hackers)* Moreu and produced by Paul Monash. Was recently fast-tracked thanks to MGM securing a $450 million credit line.

● **THE CONTINUED ADVENTURES OF REPTILE MAN... AND HIS FAITHFUL SIDEKICK TADPOLE** I kid you not! Tony Curtis will star as the superhero of the title.

● **DEEP BLUE SEA** John Zinman & Duncan Kennedy are keeping busy: As well as having

Metalder! Spielvan! Diana! (Or, at least, pretty good US recreations of them.)

Super Troopers

Mighty Morphin Power Rangers and its companion series *VR Troopers* are surely the Take That of SF TV. Once viewed as kid's stuff, they've gradually outgrown their teenybop image, and now many adults freely admit to actually enjoying them – including SFX! **MJ Simpson** talked to the series' producer Bob Hughes.

There's always been one good excuse for watching Saban Entertainment's two English-language superhero series – they're UK viewers' only chance to see Japanese live-action TV, if only in the briefest of clips. But precisely how are these programmes constructed around the original Oriental footage?

"The hardest thing is matching things like costumes, sets, locations, lighting and camera angles," says *VR Troopers'* producer Bob Hughes. "We need to edit it so it creates the illusion that the material you see on screen originated from one source."

As regular SFX readers may have gathered, there have been hundreds of "sentai ranger" shows produced in the Land of the Rising Laserdisc over the years, but few ever meet the requirements of shows like *Power Rangers* or *VR Troopers*.

"What we pick has to do with the appeal of the characters themselves, the quality of the production, and, of course, the vehicles and technology. The Toei Company in Japan has been creating this type of programme for over 15 years, and they're very good at what they do – using their shows as a source of library footage is like having the greatest second unit in the world."

One intriguing aspect of *VR Troopers* is that, whereas *Power Rangers* is largely derived from *Zyu Ranger* (1992), *Troopers* is actually *two* shows. The star, Ryan Steele, is based on the title character from *Metalder* (1987), which also featured a talking dog called Springer, the inspiration for the US-based Jeb. The Kaitlin Star and JB Reese characters, however, started life as Spielvan and Diana from 1986's *Spielvan*, the show which was replaced by *Metalder!*

"With *VR Troopers* we knew we wanted to create a team consisting of one girl and two boys," Bob says, "so we had to draw from two separate shows. This obviously complicated matters. Thankfully, there are certain characteristics common to both shows – the costumes were designed by the same creators, and often similar locations were used for filming."

Kaitlin (Sarah Brown), Ryan (Brad Hawkins), & JB (Michael Bacon) in costume and mufti.

There are, however, great chunks from both Toei series that are never used: A "funny" robot and cute kids in *Spielvan*, and some hot space-chicks in *Metalder*. These are replaced with the US-shot scenes of Professor Horatio Hart – the *VRT* equivalent of Zordon – and Kaitlin's journalistic career.

"We have no plans to introduce any of the secondary characters from the original shows into *VR Troopers*," explains Hughes. "The story-lines on *VR Troopers* bear little relation to the original shows. Our stories focus on our heroes and what we call the 'creature du jour,' as well as the usual array of villains."

Because *VR Troopers* has a lower profile than *Power Rangers*, it's attracted less criticism for its "violent" content, but the issue is something Saban is very concerned about. The main problem, though, is that the critics have generally not watched the shows. A *Power Rangers* film review in *The Sunday Times*, for instance, recently criticised "the original series' person-to-person violence," yet there has rarely been any person-to-person violence in *Power Rangers* or *VR Troopers*. "All our villains are robotic," points out Hughes, "and the action is often broad or comical. We like to differentiate between 'action' and 'violence' – you'll never find any violence between two human beings on *VR Troopers*. Indeed, we sneak messages through in these shows – the kids may be learning about tolerance, restraint or personal responsibility, while being entertained."

And precisely who are these kids? Saban's research into *Power Rangers'* first US season showed that a number of teenagers were joining the 2-11 year-olds it was aimed at, tempting the company to consider aiming the second season at an older audience. Instead, though, Saban plumped for producing a slightly "older" companion series *VR Troopers*. "We've found that the appeal extends to a broad audience, but our principal target is still 5-9 year olds."

So what's next? Well, while Saban isn't responsible for inferior clone series like *Superhuman Samurai Syber-Squad*, the bigwigs there there still have plans for future shows.

"We're already in production on a new series called *Masked Rider*," says Bob, "based on the Japanese *Kamen Rider* shows, which ran successfully for over 400 episodes. This series will première in this Autumn on the Fox Children's Network. And there are others to come..."

Zero Gravity with Hollywood Pictures, the pair have just sold *Deep Blue Sea* – a thriller about genetically altered sharks on an oil rig – to MGM for $500,000. The trouble is, genetically altered shark creatures on an oil rig sounds awfully like the recently completed *Proteus*...

● **DEEP IMPACT** Scr Bruce Joel Rubin *(Ghost)*. Prd David Brown, Richard Zanuck, Steven Spielberg. Based on Arthur C Clarke's novel *The Hammer of Gods* and announced in 1994, this now looks very likely to be Spielberg's next movie, although he has yet to commit. Brown and Zanuck were his co-producers on *Jaws*.

D&D has been big so long, how come no-one did a film before?

● **DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS** Big-budget role-playing scenario based on TSR's game of the same name. You can probably plot this one yourself. Stan Winston is the fx man.

● **EXISTENZ** (MGM) Cyberpunk thriller currently in development by David Cronenberg, probably as a post-*Crash* project.

● **FLASH GORDON** In additional to last month's comments, scriptwriter Steven E de Souza is still looking back to the original Alex Raymond strip from the '30s for inspiration – and then ignoring it. Recently de Souza said: "The new *Flash* is going to be a jaded corporate raider... His nickname in the comic strip came from when he was on the football team. We're saying the nickname came from when he was in the Air Force."

● **GAMERA** The giant turtle versus Viras the rubber squid. The latest Gamera flick released in Japan, *Gamera Giant Monster Midair Battle*, has done so well that a sequel starring his old nemesis Viras is planned to begin shooting in October for April 1996 release.

● **GREEN HORNET** (Universal) Dir Joe Dante. This was to be a post-*Phantom* (qv) project for Dante from a Chuck *(Hard Target)* Pfarrar script, but in early 1995 it was announced that the concept of the film was going back to basics and the Pfarrar script had been chucked out. Dante's involvement is now suspect.

● **HAMMER & TONG** (Hasan Shah Films) Dir/Scr Paul Catling. Prd Hassan Shah, Greg Smith. British production, an SF

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"Don't quote us!"

The story behind the famous Roswell alien autopsy film is bound to be turned into a major Hollywood movie – especially now it's rumoured that Spielberg is after it... Meanwhile, Spielberg's co-owned new studio, Dreamworks SKG, has announced its first animated movie – *Moses,* featuring the Parting of the Red Sea and so on, plus (just maybe) the voice of Charlton Heston as God – and *Indiana Jones and the Lost Continent,* a film Spielberg will give himself four months to shoot, in early '96, before moving on to the sequel to *Jurassic Park.*

The technology behind *Toy Story* – a revolutionary 3D computer animated film – will apparently be used to revamp *The Yellow Submarine,* while keeping the Beatles soundtrack intact (of course)...

The script is now almost finished for *The Prisoner* remake, to be filmed in a spruced up Portmeirion with Patrick McGoohan, Leo McKern – and Mel Gibson as the new Number Six...

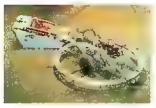
A Japanese animation company is chasing the rights to film Dark Horse's *Aliens* comics for a series of anime movies. Meanwhile, Harry Harrison's *The Stainless Steel Rat* – recently believed to be the subject of a theatrical feature – will now star in a series of Canadian TV movies based on the man's books. They'll be "like *Tekwar,*" we're reliably informed (warned?).

Robot Wars – the bastard son of bare-knuckle fighting and The Great Egg Race – comes to the UK. **Matt Bielby** investigates...

"Eat Black & Decker, robot scum!"

They're built from vacuum cleaners, fruit boxes and remote control model cars. They're armed with electric drills, chainsaws and, on the cheaper models, maybe corkscrews. They chop each other up in gladiatorial combat – then get taken home, fixed up and, perhaps, improved for the next outing. It's all very civilized really...

Top and below: Some of the 60 plus robots that took part in the most recent American Robot Wars. This is what you're up against...



Robot Wars is – you guessed it – the latest sports craze sweeping the US. Basically, you fix up a remote-control robot out of commonly-available bits 'n' pieces, then put it up against other robots in a fight to the death. So far, two large scale events have been held in the US. In the first annual Robot Wars held last year, 17 robots entered. This August, there were over 60 entrants. In 1996, who knows?

This is the year the Robot Wars idea travels overseas. Already, Mentorn Films – the people behind *Space Precinct, Challenge Anneka* and *Scratchy and Co* – is gearing up for a BBC TV series based on the idea, to combine, says Mentorn, "the competitive action of *Gladiators,* the challenge of *The Crystal Maze* and the creative ingenuity of *The Great Egg Race.*" If you fancy building a robot that you reckon could go head-to-head with allcomers, now's the time to get involved – the first UK event will take place in late '95, with the TV series planned for next year.

But what makes a good robot? Certain rules apply – you can't simply attach a bazooka to the front of your 'bot, for instance – and, anyway, ingenuity is what will get the crowd on your side. Bigger isn't always better... Yep, if you want to succeed at Robot Wars, it looks like you'll have to put your thinking caps on...

> "Robot Wars is – you guessed it – the latest craze sweeping the US"

To get involved in Robot Wars, contact the UK division of the IRWA (International Robot Warriors Association) through: Robot Wars, Mentorn Films, 140 Wardour Street, London W1V 4LJ. Or phone (0171) 287 4545. We'll bring news of the first UK event as and when...

action-thriller set on an alien planet, currently in development.

● **I AM LEGEND** A more faithful adaptation of Richard Matheson's novel of plague-filled zombies who rise at night to drink the blood of the last human survivor has been mooted with Carlo *(Fluke)* Carlei at the helm. The novel has already spawned two versions, the erratic *The Last Man on Earth* (1964), and the ultimately unsatisfying *The Omega Man* (1971).

● **INDEPENDENCE DAY** (20th Century Fox) Dir Roland Emmerich. Scr Emmerich, Dean Devlin. ExPrd Roland Emmerich, Ute Emmerich. St Will Smith, Bill Pullman, Jeff Goldblum. Invasion tale in which humankind is given three days' warning by aliens that they are planning to turn the Earth into toast, developed by the team who produced the surprise hit of 1994, *Stargate.* Currently shooting in New York, Utah, Washington DC, and Los Angeles. Picked up by Fox in February 1995, with a 4 July 1996 release date pencilled in, Emmerich will have to move if he's to hit the release date.

Half-turtle, half-mountain, *Gamera* is one of the silliest monsters ever.

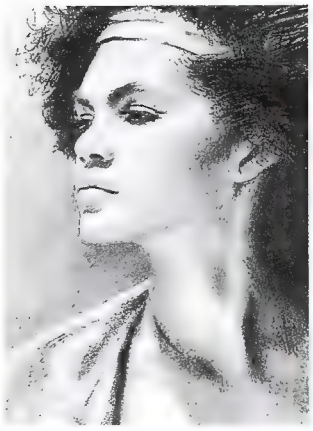
● **INVADER** Dir Mark Baker. St Cotter Smith. A satellite comes back to Earth with more than just information...

● **THE ISLAND OF DR MOREAU** Five days into shooting, it was rumoured that Richard Stanley had been sacked as director due to "creative differences" – a rumour later confirmed. He was quickly replaced by John *(Manchurian Candidate)* Frankenheimer, who immediately began altering the script – alongside actors Brando and Kilmer, original scriptwriter Walon Green and various New Line execs. Actor Rob Morrow bowed out, to be replaced by David *(Naked)* Thewlis. Meanwhile, Bill Fraker became the new director of photography. Shooting began again on 23 August in Queensland, Australia.

● **THE KILLER TONGUE** (Factory Pictures/Lola Films/Iberoamericana) Dir/Scr Alberto Sciamma. ExPrd Michael Cowan, Jason Piette. Prd Christopher Figg, Joseph D'Morais. St Bruce Campbell, Robert Englund, Alaska Gara. This $3 million gory British-Spanish SF-horror-comedy is now set to roll in Spain in September, thanks to financial backing from Spanish producer Andres Vincente Gomez.

Picturing Tabitha

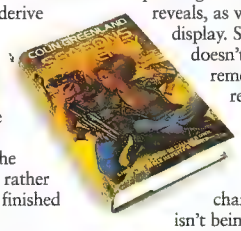
Artist Jim Burns won his second Hugo award at this year's Worldcon. He's currently doing some of his best work ever – and there's a very good reason for that, reveals **Simon Bisson**...



This pencil sketch of Tabitha, heroine of the *Plenty* books, became the cover below.

Jim Burns is one of Britain's best known science fiction artists – his smooth organic curves and photo-realistic style have already made him one of the industry's most sought after cover illustrators. I caught up with him at Intersection, this year's Worldcon, and talked about one of his recent works: the cover for Colin Greenland's *Seasons of Plenty*.

As Jim says, "Normally the author has no input at all – other than the fact that he writes the words I derive all my inspiration from." This time, however, was different. For once he and Greenland actually *discussed* the book and the cover at length – "a really nice way to work" – and the author ended up making a rather crucial contribution to the finished painting: His coat.



You see, Jim needed to refer to some real leather for the picture, and remembered seeing Colin in a black coat, "swanning around conventions." A phonecall later and the coat was in the post, ready for Jim's daughters to model. The only problem came when it was time to send the coat back – "The kids didn't want to part with it!"

Jim hadn't read any of Colin's work before he started work on the cover of *Seasons of Plenty*, so he had to go through the manuscript before he could start work on a series of sketches. As soon became clear, the cover would work best if it focused on the main character, Tabitha Jute – if the picture was *big*. "It was the largest painting I've done in a long time," he reveals, as we look at the picture on display. Surprisingly, the real thing doesn't look quite the same as I remembered it, and Burns reveals why – ever the perfectionist, he's still working on the painting, trying to give Tabitha's alien bodyguard "more character... aggression." What isn't being changed is the strangely textured cyber-baby Xtasca, with its glowing red eyes and blue-black skin. As Jim says, "It frightens children!"

One man it doesn't frighten, though, is Colin Greenland: "There are any number of versions of Tabitha," he laughs, "but this is the first that was really her." In fact, he likes it so much there's now a copy of the picture on the wall over his desk.

"I'm looking at the characters while I'm writing the third volume," he smiles. "It's the kind of visual aid authors don't usually get!"

● MARY REILLY (TriStar) If anyone has benefited from the furore surrounding *Waterworld*, it has to be TriStar, whose troubled *Mary Reilly* has been kept well out of sight. This *Jekyll and Hyde* story, told from the housekeeper's point of view, was shot in London in the Spring of 1994, with Julia Roberts and John Malkovich. The ending to the $38 million budgeted movie was then reshot in the Summer, after executives at Columbia were said to be less than enthralled, and there were reports of on-set tension between the lead players and director Stephen Frears. The film was still being tinkered with in June 1995 when parts of the soundtrack were re-dubbed. To save money, Roberts' vocals were dubbed by impersonator Kate Robbins. The original release date of 7 July 1995 was pushed back to August, and more recently again to January 1996 after a limited Christmas Day opening. The official line is that it will help the film's Oscar chances... Or, as one cynic said, they'll open it Christmas Day so no-one gets to see the reviews.

● THE MERCURY 13 (Turner Pictures) Free the...? Actually, this isn't a women-in-prison flick, but one about women in the

Robert Englund – boo! hiss! – is master of the nasty. His newie, *The Killer Tongue*, promises blood a-plenty.

arcane (a:'kein) adj. requiring secret knowledge to be understood; esoteric.

THIS JUST IN...

revive the cancelled TV series, this on-screen recognition is well-deserved. *Millennium,* the sequel to *Dark Horizon,* will be broadcast in the US in February, and was filmed back-to-back with a third TV movie, *Body & Soul.* A fourth instalment, *Time Bombs,* is due to start filming in '96.

Schwing!

A new anthology of original fiction from US publisher Baen wins a clutch of SFX awards, including Title of the Month, Concept of the Month and Cover of the Month. It's called... *Chicks in Chainmail* (We kid you not.)

"For too long," claims the blurb, "have hot-blooded babes in brass bras and chain-link bikinis been held up to scorn as the embodiment of male fantasy wish fulfilment and non-functionality. You think their swords won't cut, their clubs won't crush? You think they look *cute?*"

Contributors to this must-read volume include Harry Turtledove, George Alec Effinger, the late Roger Zelazny and the editrix herself, Esther Friesner. Possibly fearing the wrath of feminism, Baen has added a footnote to the cover: "The publisher wishes it known that the title for this volume was chosen by the editor and not by him. As a sensitive New Age Guy in good standing it would simply never occur to him to propose such a title, and he was shocked – shocked – that it did to others."

If the book is half as good as the ad, it will be brilliant.

Worldcon, we have a problem..

With the 1995 Hugos barely settled on their owner's mantelpieces, discussion is already turning to next year's awards, to be decided at LA Con III in Anaheim, California. The big question is whether *Apollo 13* – undeniably a superb film – can qualify for the "Best Dramatic Presentation" category, because it's based on a true story. However, a precedent exists – *The Right Stuff* was short-listed in 1984 – so if enough people nominate Ron Howard's stunning film it should make it onto the voting forms.

Edinburgh: Can you recognise the park where these shots from the Kafka-based *The Hunger Artist* were shot? There was generally more fantasy on display at the Edinburgh Film Festival than genuine SF.

Northern Expo

James Mahon plays Karl, one of the protagonists in the futuristic bus-stop thriller *He Shoots, He Scores.* Here he's just starting to realise he's in *big* trouble...

But is it art? **Andrew Gonzales** sifts through the weird and wonderful SF and fantasy projects on offer at the Edinburgh Film Festival...

Although it was held at exactly the same time as the '95 Worldcon, genuine science fiction projects were pretty thin on the ground at the 49th annual Drambuie Edinburgh Film Festival. Don't despair, though – there were still plenty of offerings of interest to SF fans...

- The only genuinely futuristic film on offer was John Moore's 11-minute, black and white *He Shoots, He Scores,* which tells the tale of two boys meeting at a bus stop and pondering what might be happening "up there."
- In the science fact slot was Polish director Maciej Drygas' stunning *State of Weightlessness,* which blends interviews with off-planet footage to give an insight into the human experience in space.
- Somewhere between science fiction and science fact was the short animated documentary *Abductees* by Paul Vester. It uses animation to accompany interviews with UFO abductees, resulting in a humorous – but never patronising – look at the similarities between the subjects' stories.
- The horror quotient was provided by two movies that play around with the genre's conventions. *Mute Witness,* Anthony Waller's first feature, follows mute sfx artist Billy through a night of terror after she thinks she's witnessed the making of a snuff movie. Using humour, as opposed to gore, the film proves Waller has the mettle to ably direct *An American Werewolf in Paris.*
- *Final Hour* is a Danish slasher movie directed by Martin Schmidt, in which an unplugged TV announces the names of a killer's victims just before they die.
- Fantasy fans were well catered for by the shorts *Isle of Voices* by David

Mercury space programme of the '60s. Well, if Hanks can net $150 million not getting to the moon, why not a movie about women not even getting into space?

- **METROPOLIS** Not the classic by Fritz Lang, but a new SF action movie from Ridley Scott, one of two he has named as part of a deal between Ridley's production company Scott Free and Walt Disney. Despite rumours, this isn't a sequel to *Blade Runner.* Scripted by Matt Keenart, who will co-produce with Scott and Scott Free president Chris Zarpas. See SFX2 for more details.
- **PALE FACES** (Antelope) Dir Mike Flee. Scr Mike Donald. Prd Simon Passmore. British futuristic thriller in development, budgeted at under $3 million.
- **POLICE 2000** Scr TS Cook. The versatile William Shatner is lined up to direct.
- **THE PRISONER** (ITC) The remake of the TV series now promises a script by original star Patrick McGoohan.
- **PUGILISTICA** (Big Cat Productions) Dir/Prd Mark Alexander Todd. Scr Jack Allen. British futuristic action adventure, currently going through the development mill.
- **RECON** Futuristic thriller set ten years hence, from first time director Brett Eisner. The story involves an unusual piece of machinery that can be used to enter people's minds, and is due to star Peter Gabriel.
- **THE RELIC** (Paramount) Dir Peter Hyams. Horror/thriller about a prehistoric monster loose in a museum, and almost certainly to suffer from its "been there, seen that" mix of *Alien, Species* and the dinos-in-the-kitchen episode in *Jurassic Park.* Inevitably, it boasts Stan Winston on the fx. Hyams was behind the patchy Jean-Claude Van Damme starrer, *Timecop.*
- **SECOND NATURE** (Castle Rock) Scr E. Max Frye *(Something Wicked).* A convicted murderer is released into the community, implanted with false memories in the hope that he'll lead a happy and fulfilling life. Some hope.
- **SHADOW DANCE** (Starlight) Dir/Scr Gabriel Campisi. Action-orientated SF movie about aliens, governments and conspiracy.
- **SOLO** Mario *(Panther)* Van Peebles is planning to star as a bioweapon – a killer who also happens to be a robot.
- **SOMETIMES THEY COME BACK AGAIN** (TriMark) Dir Adam Grossman. Another horror sequel, this time to the TV movie based on a Stephen King story.
- **SPEED RACER** (Warner) See SFX3 for a long list of might-have-dunnits. The latest news has Julian Temple directing from JJ Abrams' script.
- **STRANGE VOYAGE** (Portman Productions/Ideal

"Fantasy fans were well catered for by shorts such as *Isle of Voices*, and two low budgeters *The Hunger Artist* and *3*."

Cairns, *Mr Morris* by Stephen Murphy and two low-budgeters, *The Hunger Artist* and *3*. Bernard Dudden's *The Hunger Artist*, based on a Franz Kafka story, is the first film from Edinburgh's own Boxcar Productions, and follows a journo's attempts to discover why a man is starving himself. Morag McKinnon's *3*, a ghostly love story – and genuinely eerie – is equally good.

sure

● *Strange Stories*, the Italian debut feature from Sandro Buldini, is a compilation of shorts. These include stories about a man who has his air switched off because he doesn't pay the bill and a woman who visits a supermarket to buy a man...

There aren't really any conclusions about the state of filmed SF to draw from the festival, but I will say this: You can't expect to see these films at your local Warner Multiplex – but if any of them appear at your local art cinema, or turn up on Channel 4 at 2.30am, check them out. Some of the directors – Anthony Waller, for example – look set for big things...

The ghostly love story *3* (below right) was an impressive piece of fantasy film-making, while *Final Hour* (below) was an interesting Danish contribution. If your TV decides to announce your name un-asked for, we suggest you leg it...

Filmworks) Dir Suri Krishnamma. Prd Cat Villiers, Linda Beath. In development. A girl searches for her father, missing in space.

● **TENTACLE** (Hollywood Pictures) Dir/Scr Stephen (*The Jungle Book*) Sommers. A deserted luxury liner is discovered by gunrunners in the South Seas – deserted, that is, except for a monster. (Now why didn't we think of that?)

● **TO THE ENDS OF TIME** (Imperial Entertainment) Recently announced fantasy adventure. No more information at the time of going to press, but it has to be better than Imperial's last flop, based on the *Double Dragon* game.

● **WEATHERMAN** In development from Davis Entertainment. The plot involves a man who has mysterious control over the weather.

● **ZERO GRAVITY** A script by John Zinman & Duncan Kennedy about a terrorist who causes complete havoc aboard a spacestation was originally optioned by Hollywood Pictures in 1994. The two have since penned *Deep Blue Sea* (qv), about genetically altered sharks.

If men can cock it up in *Apollo 13*, then women can do the same in *The Mercury 13*.

On Thursday
9th November
Future Publishing
will launch an exciting
new roleplaying magazine

it will be called arcane

read it

arcane
the roleplaying magazine

Miniatures
The Internet
Board games
Tabletop games
Computer games
Play by mail games
Collectable card games

For more information on arcane access the arcane homepage at hhttp://www.futurenet.co.uk/

So, who is... Boris Vallejo

Briefly: Peruvian illustrator and body-builder, who moved to the USA in 1964 and began painting for Warren magazines *(Creepy,* etc) in 1971. Now a one-man posters/calendars/book covers industry.

Is he any good? Well, he can paint, there's no doubt about that. His work is often seen as clichéd, but he sticks to what he knows, and what he's good at. If you want swords, sandals and solar plexi, Boris is your man.

Major works: After working for Warren, Boris moved to Marvel, painting covers for *The Savage Sword of Conan.* His style proved eminently suitable for the covers of the seven *Gor* novels and 24 *Tarzan* books which he painted in the late '70s. Portfolios of Boris paintings are now published by PaperTiger.

What's he like? Often cited as "the new Frank Frazetta," Boris obviously swatted up on anatomy lessons at school. His subjects (both men and women) are invariably world-class body-builders, and Boris renders every muscle, sinew and tendon with stunning accuracy.

Formerly married to the conveniently named Doris Vallejo, whose poems graced some of his collections, he is now a couple with Julie Bell. Her paintings are similar to his and, if their use of each other as models is to believed, so are her body-building techniques.

Key themes: Muscles. Lots of 'em. Bulging biceps, pulsating pecs, rippling torsos, big weapons, not much clothing. massive swords, chain-mail bikinis, two-handed axes, fur loin-cloths, tight bums... Ooh...

Suggested reading: I'm sorry, I'm going to have to go and lie down...

MJ Simpson

A typical Vallejo picture – all heaving bosom(s) and well-defined muscles.

FAHRENHEIT

Fanzines so hot they burn...

THESE PEOPLE ARE AFTER OUR JOBS, REALISES A WORRIED **MJ Simpson...**

The concept of the fanzine was actually invented by science fiction fans long before football and music aficionados appropriated their idea. Not just any old fans either; former fanzine editors include Ray Bradbury, Robert Bloch, Michael Moorcock, James Blish, Harlan Ellison, Frederick Pohl and Robert Silverberg.

Of course, these days the term "fanzine" covers a pretty wide area, from single sheet newsletters to phonebook-like tomes. They can be cut-and-pasted or slickly DTPed; all-embracing or painfully specific; sold, given away, or swapped; full of interviews, reviews, analysis, satire or whatever. However they all have one thing in common – they're written, edited and published *by* fans.

After much delay, here's the long promised SFX fanzine listing. If you want your zine listed, send a copy to SFX (Zines), Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW. But remember, due to space shortages, you only get mentioned *once!* When ordering zines, make cheques/POs payable to the name mentioned at the start of the address.

● **Auton #13**
Irreverent and tasteless *Doctor Who* humour-zine. 32pp, A5, quarterly, £2. **Robert Hammond, 82 Farncombe St, Farncombe, Godalming, Surrey GU7 3LN**

● **British Fantasy Society Newsletter Vol.19 No.3**
News, reviews, Robert R McCammon, comment by Tom Holt. 28pp, A5, bi-monthly. £15 sub (includes other BFS mags). **British Fantasy Society, 2 Harwood Street, Stockport SK4 1JJ**

● **China In Your Hand #3**
Frankenstein zine: 1968 ITV version, filmography part 3, script extract, reviews. 20pp, A4, £2. **MJ Simpson, 80 Newbridge Hill, Bath BA1 3QA**

● **Circus #3**
Detailed articles on *Quatermass and the Pit, Round the Horne,* Hitchcock, *Doctor Who,* plus *Who & X-Files* fiction. 60pp, A5, bi-annual, £2.20. **Colin Brockhurst, 73 Vann Rd, Fernhurst, Haslemere, Surrey GU27 3NP**

● **Critical Wave #41**
Pretty much an essential SF news-zine: Storm Constantine interview, comment from Graham Joyce, extensive convention & zine listings. 32pp, A4, 5 issues per year. £1.95 (£8 sub). **Critical Wave Publications, c/o Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Rd, Ward End, Birmingham B8 2AG**

● **Faster Than Light #2**
Lots of reviews, a bit of fiction, and a detailed history of *Red Dwarf.* 68pp, A5, £1.25. **Matthew Parry, 89 Northcourt Ave, Reading RG2 7HG**

● **The 5 Times #4**
Authorised *Babylon 5* mag: Mira Furlan interview, episode guide & Harlan Ellison on-line. 38pp, A4, quarterly. **Babylon 5 UK Fan Club, PO Box 1147, London W3 7ZT**

● **Heroes On Film #1**
Live-action superheroes on film and TV. Reviews of mega obscure titles. 44pp, A4, $6.25. **Draculina, PO Box 969, Centralia, IL 62801, USA**

● **Krypton #5**
Lois & Clark fanclub mag. News, reviews, a guide to guest stars – plus a letter from Teri Hatcher! 36pp, A5, quarterly, £10 sub. **Gareth Hughes, House Manager's Flat, Homedee House, Garden Lane, Chester CH1 4HD**

● **Metamorph II #3**
Robin of Sherwood, Doctor Who, Barbarella, The X-Files & Ingrid Pitt. 32pp, A4, quarterly, £1.50. **Zach Farquharson-Waugh, 41 Delamere Rd, Northampton NN4 8QG**

● **Mondo #35**
Assorted amateur comic strips for your perusal. 64pp, A4, monthly, £1.35 (£15 sub). **North London Comics, 140 Amersham Ave, Edmonton, London N18 1DY**

● **Mostly Harmless #57**
Official *Hitchhiker's Guide* mag. Simon Brett interview, Douglas Adams on-line, news reviews and fiction. 28pp, A4, quarterly, £5 sub. **ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha, 26 Northampton Rd, Croydon, Surrey CR0 7HA**

● **Movieworld #1**
Reviews of SF/fantasy/horror films & videos. 14pp, A4, £1. **Kenneth Knowles, Tower View, Newnham Rd, Church Lawford, Rugby CV23 9EP**

● **New Dawn Fades #14**
Original fiction, plus a look at silent SF movies. 36pp, A4, quarterly, £2.50. **New Dawn Fades, 44 Clermiston Rd North, Edinburgh EH4 7BN**

● **New Words #4**
Original fiction. 32pp, A4, bi-monthly, £2 plus postage. **SW Theaker, 19 Cholmeley Rd, Reading, Berks. RG1 3NQ**

● **Oriental Cinema #6**
Japanese, Hong Kong, Philipino movies, etc. This is a Gamera special! 56pp, A4, quarterly, $6.45. **Draculina, PO Box 969, Centralia, IL 62801, USA**

● **Otaku #5**
Anime/manga zine: Features on *Ranma1/2, & Tenchi Muyo.* 36pp, A4, bi-monthly, £1.80 **V DeLuca, c/o 40 Stanley St, Bedford MK41 7RW**

● **Outer Space Babe**
Home produced comic strip. 32pp, A4, £1.50 plus A4 SAE. **Andy Paciorek, 29 Bridge St, Howden-le-Wear, Crook, Co. Durham DL15 8EX**

● **Out There #1**
X-Files zine: Fiction, poetry, *Kolchak* article and episode guide. 32pp, A5, £1.50 plus postage. **Darren Powis, 38 Camrose Walk, St. Dials, Cwmbran, Gwent NP44 4NN**

● **The Prydonian Renegade Vol.12 No.3**
Local (US) club-zine with info on current and forthcoming US TV SF shows.14pp, A4, monthly, $16 sub outside US. **The Prydonians of Princeton, PO Box 3194, Princeton, NJ 08543-3194, USA**

● **Quantum Quest #12**
Quantum Leap zine: News, reviews, and a special Scott/Dean talk transcribed from a US convention. 32pp, A5, quarterly, £3 sub. **Miss H C Broadribb, 5 Sandfield Rd, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 8AW**

● **Quark, Strangeness & Charm Vol.1 No.1**
"The SF & Fantasy Quiz": 200 questions. 12pp, A5, monthly, £3. **A Livingston, 25 Bryn Mawr, Buckley, Clwyd CH7 2DY**

● **Red Leopard #2**
Anime zine with articles on cult movies, and Jackie Chan 48pp, A5, quarterly, £1.50. **Peter Cullen, 329 Finchampstead Rd, Wokingham, Berkshire RG11 3JT**

● **Screen Scene #1**
Zine for cinema-goers, looking at *Raiders of the Lost Ark.* 10pp, A4, £1. **Hillary Stephen, 80 Newbridge Hill, Bath, Avon BA1 3QA**

● **The Snu #3**
Robert Rankin & Terrence Dicks interviews, plus RPGs & *B5.* 24 pp, A4, £1. **Chris Arnsby, 21 Hadrians Close, Witham, Essex CM8 1XA**

● **Stone Circle #1**
Reviews of *Doctor Who* adventures. 44pp, A5, quarterly, £1.70. **John Isles, 68 Riddings Rd, Deighton, Huddersfield, West Yorks. HD2 1HS**

● **Tales from the Broken Drum #22**
Clubzine of Octarine, the SF Humour Society. Humour, cartoons and reviews. 40pp, A5, quarterly. £5 sub. **Octarine, 2 Egerton Drive, Stapleford, Nottingham**

● **The Tencton Planet #26**
Alien Nation fanclub zine. Set report from the *Body & Soul* TV movie. 16pp, A5, bi-monthly, £6 sub. **The Tencton Planet, 110 Richmond St, Coventry CV2 4HY**

● **Thermal Lance #24**
Who-zine, also covering *Space Precinct, X-Files & Twin Peaks.* 32pp, A5, £1.20, bi-monthly **Thermal Lance, 6 Vale Mills, Boyer St, Derby DE22 3TE**

● **TV Fuzz #1**
TV reviews plus *X-Files* episode guide. 24pp, A4, large SAE plus two 25p stamps; **AJ McKirdy, 20 Macdonald Walk, Balloch G83 8QH**

● **USS Beagle #8**
Clubzine of P&O Containers Sci-Fi Appreciation Society! News, reviews and a profile of Tom Holt. 14pp, A4, A4 SAE, plus 32p stamp. **Paul Bines, 357 Church Rd, Basildon, Essex SS14 2EU**

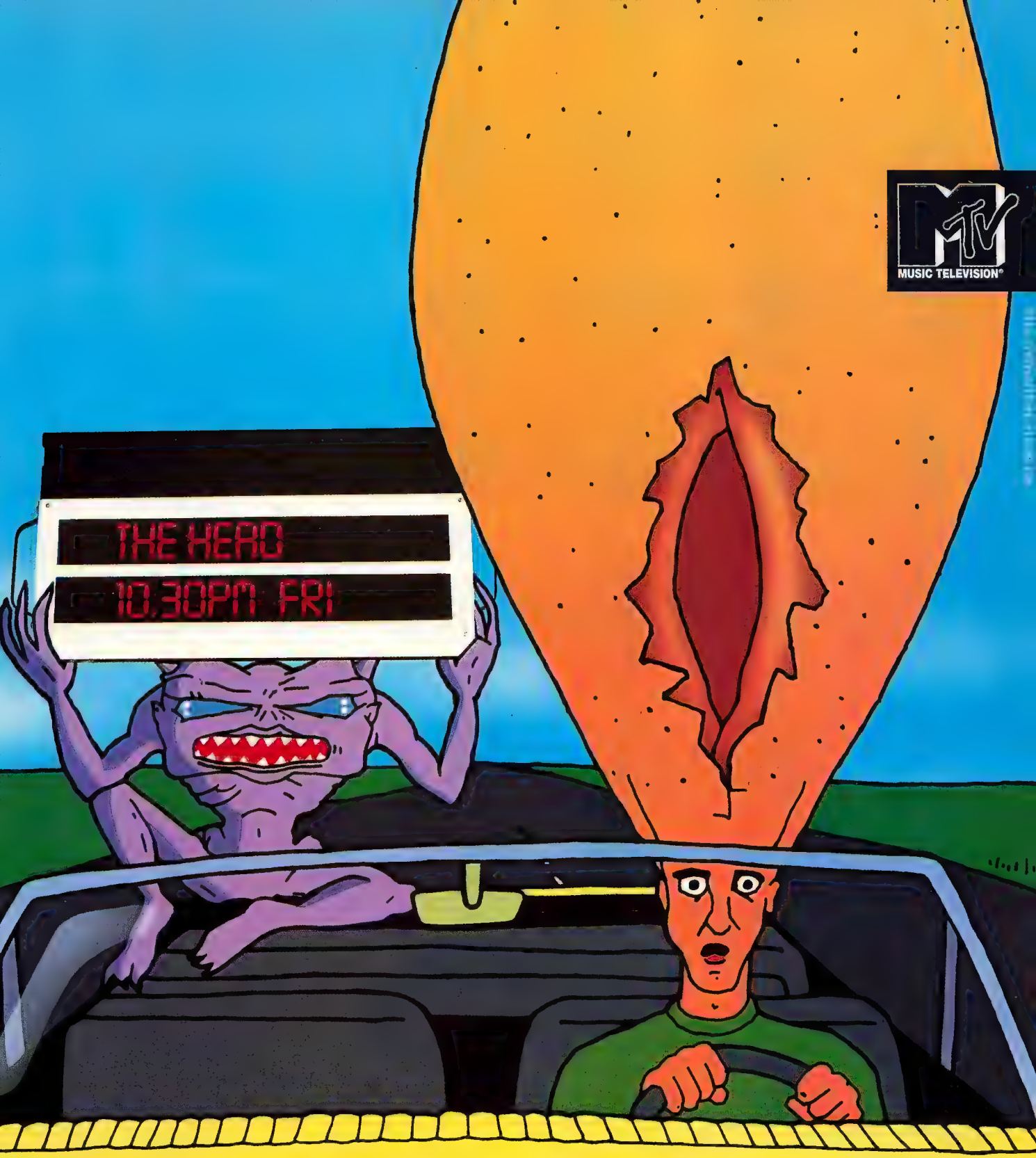
● **Wolfweed #0**
Articles on *The X-Files, B5* and *Who,* plus *Who* fiction. 36pp, A5, £1 plus postage. **Leigh Hunt, 4 Roebuck Close, Ashtead, Surrey KT21 2DN**

That's all we've got space for this month – but there'll be more next ish, promise!

Fanzine of the Month

● **Legend #17**

"The Official Jerry Goldsmith Music Society Journal": Session report on Goldsmith conducting *A Streetcar Named Desire,* John Scott interview & filmography (Jules Verne's *Rocket to the Moon, The People that Time Forgot, Greystoke, King Kong Lives, Clan of the Cave Bear,* and many others...), plus stacks of soundtrack reviews Professionally laid out and excellent writing to boot. 54pp, A4. **Jonathan Axworthy, 102 Horndean Rd, Emsworth, Hants. PO10 7TL**


THE HEAD
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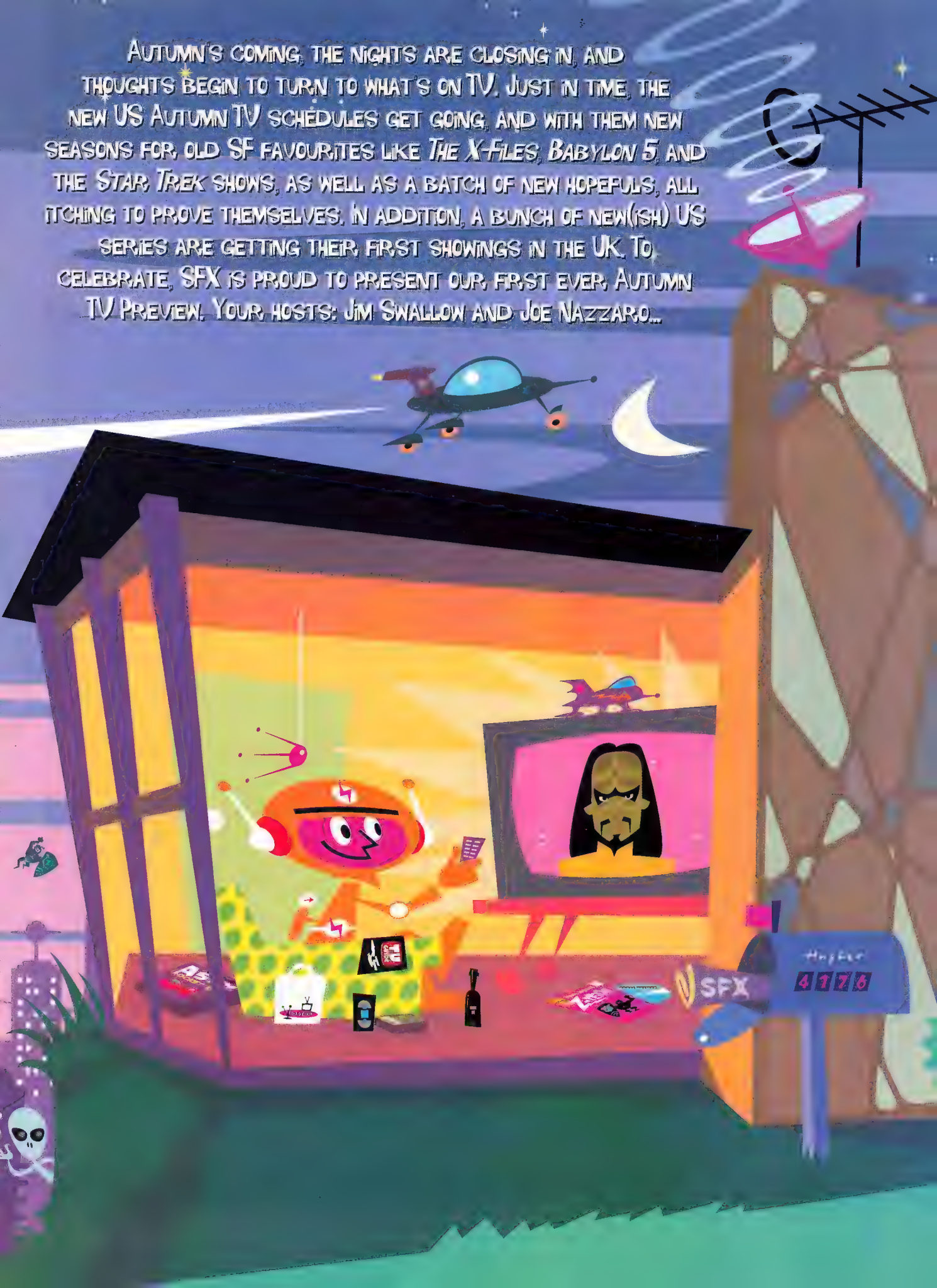
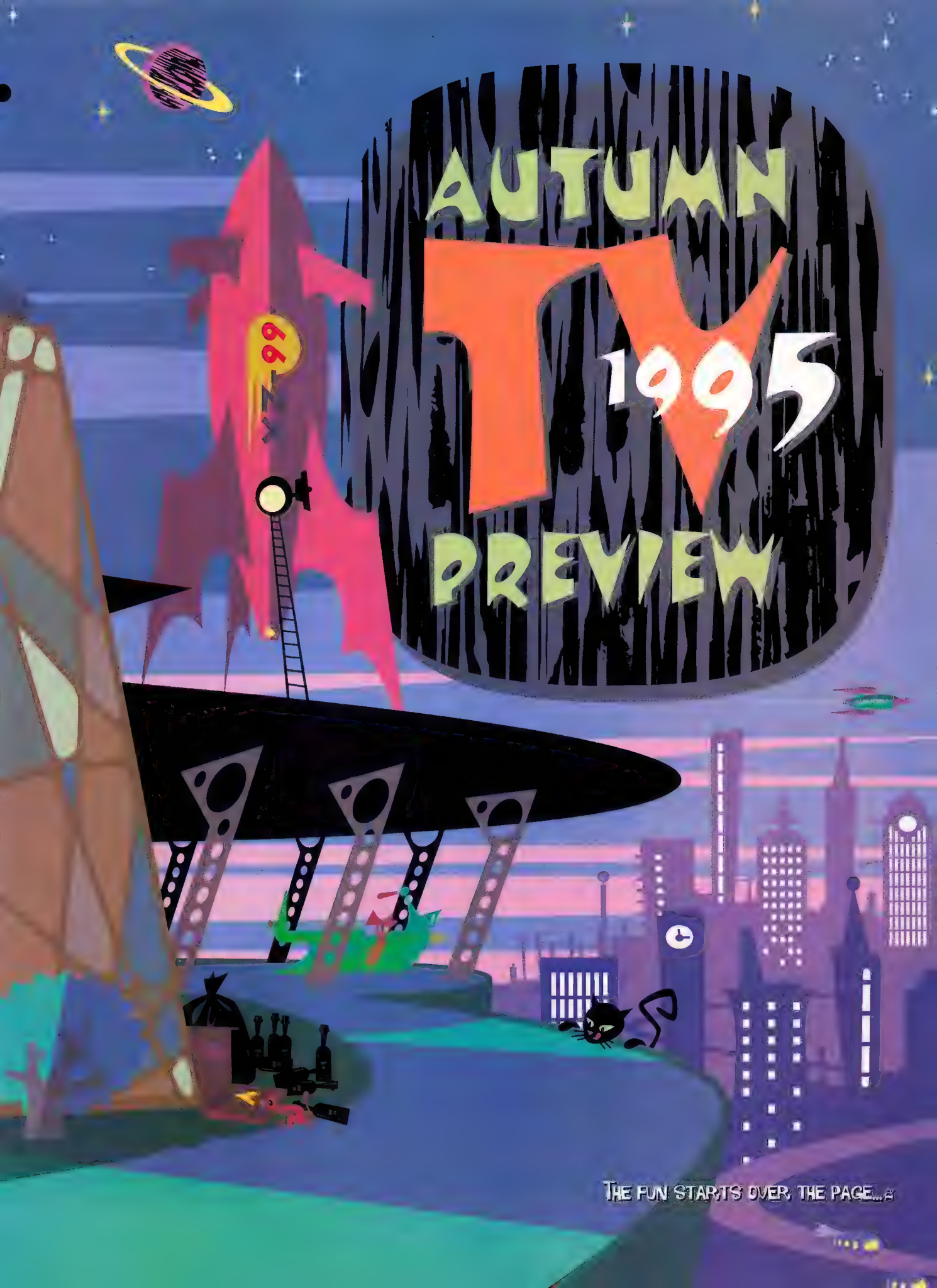


AUTUMN'S COMING, THE NIGHTS ARE CLOSING IN, AND THOUGHTS BEGIN TO TURN TO WHAT'S ON TV. JUST IN TIME, THE NEW US AUTUMN TV SCHEDULES GET GOING, AND WITH THEM NEW SEASONS FOR OLD SF FAVOURITES LIKE *THE X-FILES*, *BABYLON 5* AND THE *STAR TREK* SHOWS, AS WELL AS A BATCH OF NEW HOPEFULS, ALL ITCHING TO PROVE THEMSELVES. IN ADDITION, A BUNCH OF NEW(ISH) US SERIES ARE GETTING THEIR FIRST SHOWINGS IN THE UK. TO CELEBRATE, SFX IS PROUD TO PRESENT OUR FIRST EVER AUTUMN TV PREVIEW. YOUR HOSTS: JIM SWALLOW AND JOE NAZZARO...


AUTUMN
TV
1995
PREVIEW
THE FUN STARTS OVER THE PAGE...

IT BEGINS...

OVER THE NEXT 21 PAGES, WE LOOK AT ALL THE SIGNIFICANT NEW US SHOWS – BOTH NEW SERIES, AND OLD FAVES RETURNING FOR THE NEW SEASON – AS WELL AS '94-'95 SEASON PROJECTS DUE TO GET THEIR FIRST SHOWINGS IN THE UK. ALONG THE WAY, WE'VE GOT LARGER FEATURES ON SHOWS LIKE AMERICAN GOTHIC AND THE X-FILES, ALONG WITH INTERVIEWS WITH EVERYONE FROM EARTH 2'S CLANCY BROWN TO SPACE PRECINCT'S ROB YOUNGBLOOD. WE ROUND THINGS OFF WITH A LIST OF MINI-SERIES, PILOTS AND SHOWS IN PRE-PRODUCTION. TV SF MAY BE GASPING FOR BREATH IN THE UK, BUT IT'S ALIVE AND KICKING ACROSS THE ATLANTIC...

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NEXT 21 PAGES...

DORN AGAIN

Michael Dorn – Worf from *The Next Generation* – joins the regular cast of *Deep Space Nine* with season four. Dorn talks to SFX about donning the latex again on page 40.

SPACE WARS

Take *Top Gun*, mix in elements of a gritty Vietnam movie, and set the whole thing in space, and you have the makings of a top-rated show. Ex-*X-Files* writers Morgan and Wong explain the genesis of *Space: Above and Beyond* on page 34.

SON OF ZEUS

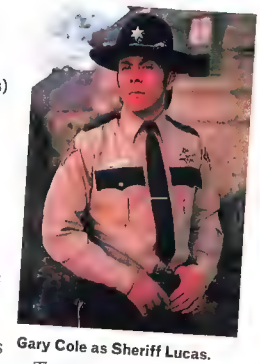
Hercules: The Legendary Journeys was one of the surprise hits of last season. Now it's back, and it's brought a spin-off series called *Xena* with it. Producers John Schulian and RJ Stewart explain their success on page 28.

THE WAY BACK

Star Trek: Voyager enters its second year with a simple philosophy – do more of the same, but do it better. Executive producer Jeri Taylor talks to SFX about what worked from the first season, and her hopes for the second, on page 42.

AMERICAN GOTHIC

(Renaissance Pictures)



Gary Cole as Sheriff Lucas.

Genre: Horror fantasy.
US Status: First season currently airing on CBS.
UK Status: First season to be shown by Channel 4 in the near future.
Cast & Crew: Executive producers Sam Raimi and Robert Tapert, best known recently for shows like *M.A.N.T.I.S.*, *Hercules* and *Xena*; produced and written by Shaun Cassidy; starring Gary Cole, Paige Turco and Jake Weber.
Series Concept: The flipside of *Picket Fences* or *Northern Exposure*. The basic idea behind CBS's post-*X-Files* challenger will be familiar to readers of Stephen King's stories set in the small town of Castle Rock. But instead of King's Maine location, *American Gothic* takes place in Trinity, South Carolina. This time round, it's the evil Sheriff Lucas Buck who rules the populace – with, it would appear, the help of supernatural powers. Expect a cross between *Twin Peaks* and *Eerie, Indiana*.
Turn Ons: Given Raimi and Tapert's track record, this could well be be a good 'un.
Turn Offs: Not a very original idea for a show, given the number of King books, movies and mini-series we've seen over the last few years...
For more, see feature opposite.

BABYLON 5

(Babylonian Productions)

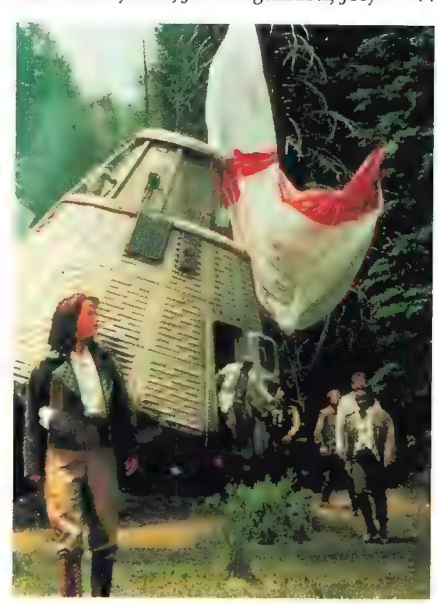
Genre: Science fiction drama.
US Status: Third season about to begin production; due to air on PTEN later this year.
UK Status: Second season recently finished airing on Channel 4; third season due to air mid-1996; first season episodes available on video.
Cast & Crew: Created by J. Michael Straczynski; starring Bruce Boxleitner, Mira Furlan, Peter Jurasik, Jerry Doyle, Andreas Katsulas, Andrea Thompson, Claudia Christian and Richard Biggs.
Series Concept: A complicated science fiction drama set in space, with the background plot thickening every episode. As the second season came to an explosive climax, Captain John Sheridan, Ambassador Delenn and the rest of the Earth Alliance command crew had to face up to the dawning realisation that The War is just beginning. Rumoured briefly on the Internet to have been in danger of cancellation, *Babylon 5*'s third season proceeds apace, although allegedly with a somewhat slimmer budget than previous seasons, and with some fairly sweeping cast changes, necessitated by the season two finale. American *B5* fans won't see the last four episodes of season two – already aired here in the UK – until October (where they'll lead straight into the next season). We can't gloat too much, though – after all, British fans will have to wait until the middle of 1996 to see year three on Channel 4.
Turn Ons: Intriguing story structure, engaging characters and amazing CGI effects make this a stand-out series.
Turn Offs: Too many recent shows dedicated to crowd-pleasing revelations mean an occasional lack of episodic plot; occasional speeches had some members of the SFX crew collapsing with laughter. Three seasons into a complex overall storyline, it could now be hard to get new viewers interested too...
For more, see feature on page 22.

Sheridan and Delenn are stunned by *another* revelation...

EARTH 2

(Amblin Television and Universal Television)

Genre: Science fiction drama.
US Status: Cancelled after one season on NBC. Unconfirmed rumours abound, however, that ABC are considering reviving the show as a mid-season replacement.
UK Status: Will air on Sky in October.
Cast & Crew: Created by Michael Duggan, Carol Flint and Mark Levin; cast includes Debrah Farentino, Clancy Brown (from *Highlander*), Sullivan Walker, Jessica Steen, Rebecca Gayheart, John Gegenhuber, Joey



The cast of *Earth 2* wander around in search of a plot.

ROTTEN BOROUGH

SMALL TOWN LIVING CAN BE HELL IN AMERICAN GOTHIC

FIRMLY FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE X-FILES – BUT, IF ANYTHING, EVEN SCARIER – AMERICAN GOTHIC BRINGS GHOSTS, SMALL TOWN MYSTERIES, PLENTY OF SHOCKS AND "A SHERIFF WHO MAY OR MAY NOT BE THE DEVIL" TO THE SMALL SCREEN. GRINNING HORRIBLY, **JOE NAZZARO** CHATS WITH SOME OF THE WARPED MINDS INVOLVED...

US TV viewers, who've got used to their Friday-night weirdness fix with *The X-Files* and *Picket Fences*, will soon have another hour of bone-chilling nastiness to look forward to – *American Gothic*, a show about a small-town South Carolina sheriff who's the epitome of evil. If the debut episode is anything to go by – in the opening scene, a deranged father smashes his teenage daughter's head in with a shovel, and things quickly go downhill from there – it's guaranteed to send a very big tingle down America's spine.

Series creator Shaun Cassidy – a 36-year-old former teen heartthrob – makes no excuses for the show's gruesome grabber, recently telling a group of US TV critics it's there "to establish just how evil *American Gothic*'s central character really is." If they weren't clear on that before, they certainly are now...

Gary Cole – from, of all things, *The Brady Bunch Movie* and *Midnight Caller* – stars in a very different sort of role as Lucas Buck, new sheriff of the small southern of Trinity. He quickly involves himself in the lives of the townspeople, usually trying to bring out the very worst in them. Whether he's the Devil himself or just a guy with a really bad attitude is never made clear – at least, not so far – but he's definitely someone you don't want to mess with.

"If I look serious and cross my arms, do you reckon I'll be as popular as Scully?"

As bad old Sheriff Lucas Buck starts to mess with the lives of the folks of Trinity, Caleb Temple (Lucas Black) wonders if he dares ask the way to the nearest public toilet...

"The series certainly has its supernatural overtones... Some of the things we're doing with the effects reinforce that creepy feeling – putting in odd skies and backgrounds that move a little strangely."

Kevin Kutchaver, *American Gothic*'s digital fx artist

Providing a counterpoint to Lucas Buck s Trinity's doctor, Matt Crowder (played by Jake Weber), a recovering alcoholic who lost his family in a car accident in which he was behind the wheel. Searching for his own redemption, Crowder is the show's force for good. Who will win the epic struggle remains to be seen, but the show's creators warn viewers not to bet against the baddie...

Part of the show's success is its subtlety, something which isn't restricted to the scripts and acting.

"We're doing some subtle, scary stuff," says *AG*'s special effects consultant Kevin O'Neill, who's also working on effects for the *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* and *Xena: Warrior Princess* shows this season. *American Gothic*, however, provides some very different challenges.

"There are a lot of very odd moments that you think you may or may not have seen; quick cuts that are very subtle. The effects are related to a character who's a ghost, so there are a lot of dramatic appearances and disappearances in the show."

"It certainly has its supernatural overtones," agrees digital fx artist Kevin Kutchaver, "and some of the things we're doing are to reinforce that creepy feeling: putting in odd skies and backgrounds that move a little strangely. Basically, it's adding a surreal edge to the whole show.

"There're a lot of effects shots in the pilot, mostly involving the ghost. There's a metamorphosis of someone standing in an old, abandoned room, for example, and when they open up a pocket-watch, it reverts back to the nice, warm room it was ten or 15 years ago. It s a very dreamy kind of show."

Executive producer Sam (*Evil Dead*/*M.A.N.T.I.S.*/*The Quick and the Dead*) Raimi – he's a busy boy at the moment – says *American Gothic* is closer to "*Melrose Place* meets *The Exorcist*" than anything else. He insists – almost unnecessarily – that one of his main goals of the show is to scare people. Some have said that with events like the murder trial that recently took place in the Carolinas where mother Susan Sm th confessed to drowning her two children – happening in the real world, Raimi and co will have to work hard to make fiction scarier than fact. Still, you know these guys - they're sure to give it the old school try...

THE WARZONE

IT'S YEAR THREE FOR BABYLON 5, AND THE TENSION MOUNTS...

BABYLON 5 REMAINS ONE OF BEST-LOVED SCIENCE FICTION TV SERIES OF THE LAST DECADE, COMBINING STAR TREK-STYLE SPACE OPERATICS AND CHARACTER INTERACTION WITH A COMPLEX, NOVEL-LIKE STORYLINE. AS J. MICHAEL STRACZYNSKI'S "LAST, BEST HOPE FOR PEACE" RAPIDLY BECOMES A WAR ZONE, JIM SWALLOW LOOKS AT WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR THE MEN AND WOMEN OF BABYLON 5...

JMS hinted at a convention recently that Londo may not continue his downward slide...

Despite Internet rumour-storms about impending cancellation, *Babylon 5* is back for 1996, with a commitment to more stories relating to the main plot arc – and an allegedly trimmed budget. With even more threads of the ever-more-complex story dangling after two seasons, and ideas and rumours flying thick and fast, the exact direction *B5*: Year Three will fly in can only be guessed at...

So let's do some guessing, eh?

Certainly, after the shooting war between B5 and the Centauri that lit up the closing acts of season two finale "The Fall of Night," the question of the station's neutrality has to be addressed – and quickly. As Londo allies himself with the Shadows, and the other characters line up in opposition, B5 looks certain to become an independent state, in control of its own destiny. The problem is, if the Centauri become tools of the Shadows, can all-out war between the differing factions be far behind? And can the renegade Narn refugees sway the loyalties of the EarthForce crew their way? Whatever happens, a good deal of fighting is guaranteed...

Season three will also see other developments on a smaller, more personal level. Sheridan's past, and the quest for his missing wife, will play a bigger role in his present, for instance – perhaps tying in to the fate of Zeta squadron leader Keffer, missing in action after his encounter with the Shadow starship. And we'll see some old faces again, in the form of Ambassador Sinclair taking time away from his duties on Minbar, and the return of Psi-Cop Bester, forever prowling and searching for weaknesses among the B5 command crew now that his sleeper, Talia Winters, has been exposed.

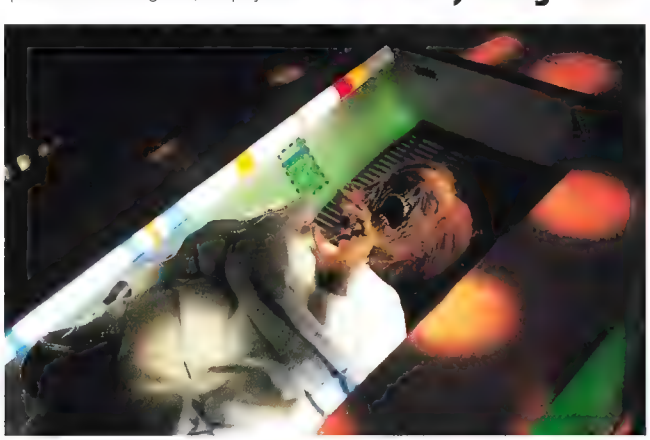
Zathras, the enigmatic alien from "Babylon Squared," has apparently joined forces with Delenn's former teacher Draal, who now acts as custodian of the world B5 orbits. Given Zathras' connection with the adrift-in-time Babylon 4 spacestation, and his loyalty to "The One" (a future Sinclair), the throwaway mention of his name by Draal in "The Long Twilight Struggle" points to his imminent return. Meanwhile, Sheridan and Delenn grow ever-closer, and their affection for each other may go further than either realise; they have already admitted they would die for each other – can the admission of deeper feelings be far away? Back at Earthdome, as the quiet coup d'etat gathers momentum, Babylon 5 seems destined to become pivotal to interplanetary politics, as power groups like EarthForce, the Psi-Corps, the Ministry of Peace, the Nightwatch and the faceless Control vie for control over its population.

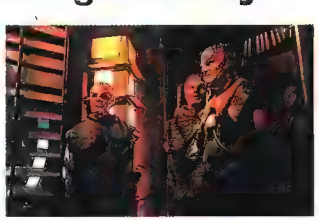
"Harlan Ellison's 'Demon on the Run' (a sequel to *The Outer Limits*' 'Demon with a Glass Hand') may see the light of day."

While several side-plot stories were shelved in season two to favour arc episodes, shows like DC Fontana's "All Our Songs Forgotten," Harlan Ellison's much-awaited "Demon on the Run" (a sequel to *The Outer Limits* show "Demon with a Glass Hand"), Straczynski's "The Very Long Night of Susan Ivanova" and the promised Neil Gaiman script may see the light of day.

Watch for story threads pre empting the postulated season four/five spin-off series, and as for the opening narration, expect the dulcet tones of Commander Ivanova "Babylon 5 was our last, best hope for peace. It failed."

The War is just beginning...





Expect to see a number of stories that act as stand-alone episodes alongside the important arc storylines in season three of *Babylon 5*.

Zimmerman, J Madison Wright, Antonio Sabato Jr and Tim (*The Shadow/Congo*) Curry.
Series Concept: *Wagon Train* on another planet, or a *Lost in Space* for the '90s. An advance scout party for a colonising mission crash-lands on the wrong side of the new world, and must trek 3,400 miles to the only fertile land. With hardly any supplies and equipment, they must fight to survive on their journey across the barren planet – especially when *Earth 2* turns out to be more inhabited than anyone thought...
Turn Ons: Good solid cast, stunning locations and an excellent recurring baddie in Tim Curry.
Turn Offs: Handicapped by slow plotting and soap opera histrionics.
See interview with Clancy Brown on page 26.

FOREVER KNIGHT
(Paragon and Tristar Television)

Genre: Horror.
US Status: Third season in production.
UK Status: First season to be shown late on Saturday nights on Sky 1 any time now.
Cast & Crew: Exec producers Jon Slan & James D Parriott; starring Geraint Wyn Davies, John Kapelos, Catherine Disher, Natsuko Ohama and Nigel Bennett.
Series Concept: *Interview With the Vampire Cop*. Nick Knight, a vampire from the 13th century, seeks to regain his mortality by helping others – so he becomes a homicide detective. Partnered with wise-cracking goodfella Don Schanke, his allergic reactions to sunlight and garlic are explained away with the help of his pathologist friend Natalie Lambert. But Knight has to contend with his former master LaCroix, his former lover Janette and an evil past which has a way of catching up with him. Season three will feature a cast reshuffle, with Janette and Schanke being written out.
Turn Ons: Lots of cool gothic-style stuff, blood-letting and *Highlander*-style flashbacks.
Turn Offs: The first season is rather duff, and the gothic bits can get a bit pretentious.

HERCULES: THE LEGENDARY JOURNEYS
(Renaissance Pictures)

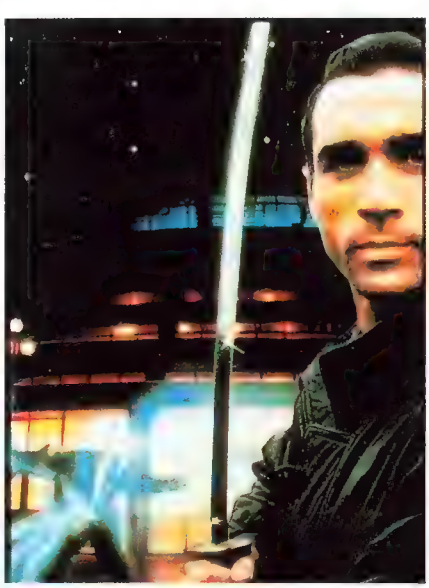
Genre: Fantasy adventure.
US Status: Second season under production; due to air on syndicated TV in September.

***Hercules* star Kevin Sorbo is, as yet, unknown in Britain.**

UK Status: Unknown.
Cast & Crew: Executive producers Sam (Mr Busy) Raimi, Robert Tapert and John Schulian; starring Kevin Sorbo and a lot of CGI monsters.
Series Concept: *Conan: The Series*. After five TV movies as part of MCA TV's *Action Pack*, *Hercules* spun-off into an on-going show filmed in Auckland, New Zealand. Half-mortal, half-god, Hercules and his occasional sidekick Iolaus journey across the ancient world, with a mission to protect humanity and avenge the brutal murder of Herc's wife and children at the hands of his evil stepmother Hera, crossing paths with various mythical monsters and sword-wielding baddies en route.
Turn Ons: It's fast-paced, and the only true "fantasy" show on air – at least until the spin-off *Xena* arrives...
Turn Offs: Plays it fast and loose with the mythology; lots of posturing.
For more, see interview with producer John Schulian on page 28.

HIGHLANDER: THE SERIES
(Rysher Entertainment)

Genre: Fantasy adventure.
US Status: Fourth season under production; was due to air in syndication this month.
UK Status: Third season currently airing on Sky; first season to begin airing on the BBC in the near future. Majority of first and second season shows available on video.

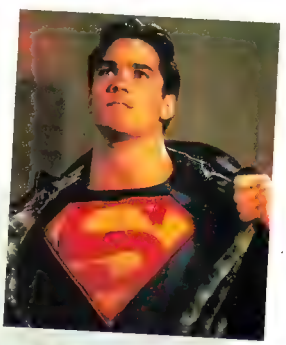


Adrian Paul as the *other* Highlander – Duncan McLeod.

Cast & Crew: Executive producers Bill Panzer & Peter Davis; starring Adrian Paul, Stan Kirsch, Jim Byrnes and Lisa Howard.
Series Concept: There can be more than one... Duncan MacLeod, cousin of the movie's Connor MacLeod, fights evil immortals throughout history, with the help of his student and neophyte immortal Richie Ryan. Joe Dawson, an ex-member of the Watchers (a secret group who record the history of the immortals), and a new love interest, surgeon Anne Lindsey, help out. Season four promises a stonking opener, with MacLeod returning to Scotland for the first time in centuries for a showdown with his arch-foe, Kanwulf the Viking.
Turn Ons: Plenty of swordplay and historical flashbacks, with plots often better than those used in the feature films.
Turn Offs: Sometimes falls into the formulaic "immortal-of-the-week" trap.

LOIS & CLARK: THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN
(Warner Bros)

Genre: Superhero drama.
US Status: Third season in production.
UK Status: Second season just completed airing on BBC 1, which has announced it will be showing season three, but as usual refuses to commits itself about when; first season episodes sporadically being released on video.
Cast & Crew: Executive producer Thania St John; starring Dean Cain, Teri Hatcher, Justin Whalin, Lane Smith, K Callan and Eddie Jones. Guest stars include Denise Crosby, Raquel Welch and Robert Culp.
Series Concept: Superman meets *Moonlighting*. The Man of Steel continues with his '90 make-over, the plots focusing more on Clark Kent and Lois Lane's "will-they-won't-they?" love match than saving the world. Armed with storylines that play down the superhero elements and boost the romantic ones, *Lois & Clark* early on hit on a formula to save it from the



Will they? Won't they? Season three opens with the answer.

one-season dumper that most other recent hero shows have been thrown into (*Superboy*, *The Flash*, and *M.A.N.T.I.S.* all spring to mind...). First season episodes concentrate on Lex Luthor (John Shea), while the second season provides a more varied menu of villains. If Dean Cain is to be believed, the answer to the cliffhanger at the end of season two will be that he and Lois *do* get married – he has suggested that this would provide an extra angle on the show that would keep the format fresh for another year.
Turn Ons: Engaging cast and snappy writing make a change from the usual po-faced spandex hero outings; being filmed in dry weather and daylight makes a change as well.
Turn Offs: Some "real" Superman fans might be disappointed by the lack of tall-building leaping; others may find it a bit too cute. The effects look like they've been done on the cheap – but then, the show doesn't rely on effects, does it?

M.A.N.T.I.S.

(Western Renaissance Pictures/ Hamm & Kitchen Company)

Genre: Superhero drama.
US Status: Cancelled after one season.

***M.A.N.T.I.S.*: Just one show from the prolific Sam Raimi.**

UK Status: The BBC have the rights but have still not scheduled the series; the pilot is available on video.
Cast & Crew: Executive producers James McAdams, Sam Hamm (who wrote the first Burton *Batman* film), Sam (Mr Busy) Raimi, Robert Tapert, Bryce Zabel; starring Carl Lumbly, Roger Rees, Galyn Gorg and Christopher Gartin.
Series Concept: Marvel's *Iron Man* with an insect motif. Paraplegic scientist Miles Hawkins, together with his partner John Stonebrake, creates an exo-skeleton powersuit which enables Hawkins to walk once more – and fight urban crime. Along with his morphing aircar and hi-tech weapons, Hawkins becomes the M.A.N.T.I.S., pursued by love interest policewoman Leora Maxwell, and assisted by teen biker Taylor Savidge.

This idea isn't a new one. *Exo-Man* in the '70s was a failed pilot for a similar series. But after substantial changes from its pilot, *M.A.N.T.I.S.* survived for a season on Fox before its May cancellation. While early episodes concentrated on moody, *Batman*-esque urban villainy, later shows went into real comic-book territory with *Men In Black* aliens, time travel and psychic powers.
Turn Ons: Impressively funky hardware and some engaging storylines.
Turn Offs: Seen-it-all-before format; a little too politically correct at times.

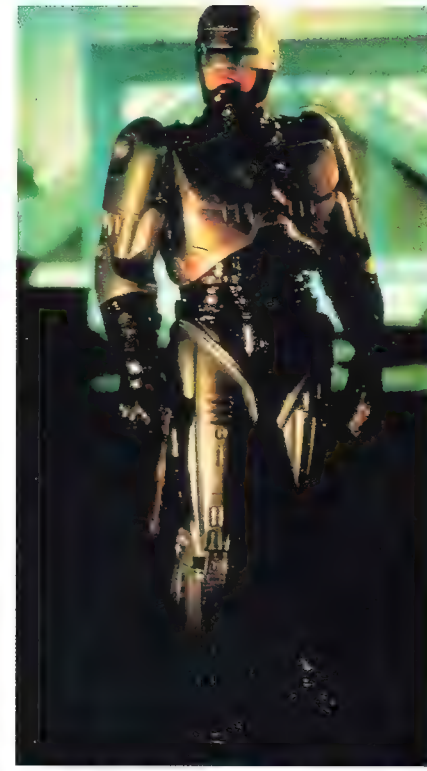
THE OUTER LIMITS

(Trilogy Entertainment and Atlantis Films)

Genre: SF anthology.
US Status: First season has recently finished airing on Showtime; season two is currently in production for broadcast next year.
UK Status: BBC 2 finished showing the series

The updated *Outer Limits* is set for a second series.

halfway through the first season. No date has been set for showing the remaining episodes.
Cast & Crew: No regular cast; producers Pen Densham, Michael Cassutt, Manny Coto, Jonathan Glassner.
Series Concept: A revival of the SF/fantasy/ horror anthology show of the '60s, this time featuring such big name guest stars as Robert Patrick, Lloyd and Beau Bridges, William Sadler, Michael Dorn, Nancy Allen, Leonard Nimoy and David Warner. Some episodes were original storylines, while others, like "The Sandkings," are based on SF short stories.
Turn Ons: A new tale every week; always something different to offer.
Turn Offs: From week to week you never really know what you're going to get, and the quality of the stories can vary widely.



***RoboCop* in US-prime-time-TV-friendly-arrest-mode shock!**

ROBOCOP: THE SERIES

(Skyvision Entertainment)

Genre: Science fiction drama.
US Status: Sadly cancelled after one season. Production company Skyvision, however, is planning to bring *RoboCop* back in a series of up to four TV movies.
UK Status: Recently came to the end of a Saturday night re-run on Sky 1; it may appear on ITV in the future. First dozen or so episodes available on video.
Cast & Crew: Executive producer Stephen Downing; starring Richard Eden, Yvette Nipar, Blu Mankuma, Sarah Campbell, Andrea Roth and David Gardner.
Series Concept: The future of law enforcement comes to the small screen. Set some time after the *RoboCop* features, *Robocop: The Series* follows cyborg copper Murphy on his Detroit beat. Instead of movie partner Lewis, Robo's new sidekick is Detective Lisa Madigan. Other new faces for the small screen include desk sergeant Parks, OCP tech Charlie Lippincott, that old pulp TV sci-fi stand-by, the cute kid (this time in the form of an orphan called Gadget), plus cyberspace "ghost" Diana and a new Chairman at OCP.

After the show's cancellation, Skyvision apparently went on an international search for financial backers for the proposed TV movies. ITV was mentioned at one point, though this has never been confirmed.
Turn Ons: Good clean fun, *RoboCop: The Series* doesn't take itself too seriously, and boasts some amusing (if heavy-handed) satire on the media and pop culture.
Turn Offs: Too many ham-fisted "message" stories; fans of the movies will miss the violence and black humour – this can come across as bland when compared with the original.

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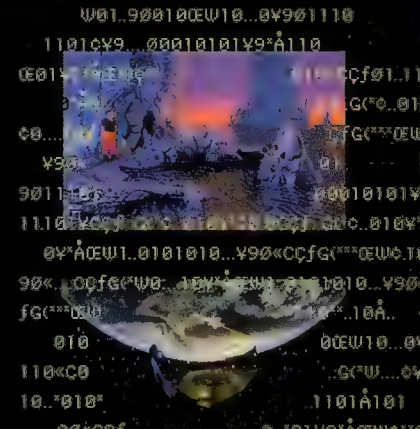

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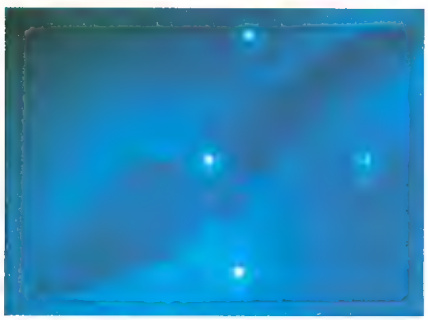


***seaQuest*: Back for a third try, perhaps with a new name...**

SEAQUEST DSV

(Amblin Television and Universal Television)

Genre: Science fiction drama.
US Status: A shorter third season – possibly to be renamed *seaQuest 2032* – is in production, due to start airing on NBC any time now.
UK Status: First season cut to shreds and shown haphazardly on ITV. Second season bought, but as yet unshown, with no immediate plans.
Cast & Crew: Created by Rockne S O'Bannon; executive producers Steven Spielberg, David J Burke and Patrick Hasburgh; cast includes Roy Scheider, Jonathan Brandis, Don Franklin and Ted Raimi. Major cast changes occur in season two and season three, including the introduction of Michael Ironside (the bad guy from *Total Recall*) as the new captain in the third year.
Series Concept: *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* for the '90s. The crew of a super-submarine patrols the oceans of the world, protecting the innocent and the Earth's ecology. While the first season was strongly "green" and majored on "science faction" stories, nervous TV execs messed with the formula and played about with the cast, location and sets for season two, which saw more fantastic, hokey story elements – to the displeasure of lead actor Scheider. Some fans liked the new direction; many hated it. Season three promises to be something of a return to the earlier style, with a harder cyberpunk edge.
Turn Ons: Great cast, good effects and some solid action stories.
Turn Offs: Many season two shows are dogs (with fleas), and the series concept is unoriginal.
See interview with Patrick Hasburgh on page 30.

SLIDERS

(St. Clare Entertainment)

Genre: Science fiction drama.
US Status: Cancelled after nine episodes, then resurrected as a mid-season replacement to air on Fox next year.
UK Status: Will air on Sky 1 in early '96.
Cast & Crew: Created by Robert K Weiss and

Maximillian Arturo (John Rhys-Davies) proving the sun really does shine out of his *(Snip! – Ed)*

Tracey Torme; executive producer Leslie Belzberg; starring Jerry O'Connell (much slimmed down since *Stand By Me*), John Rhys-Davies, Cleavant Derricks and Sabrina Lloyd.
Series Concept: *The Time Tunnel* meets *Fantastic Journey*, with a twist. A whiz-kid physics genius creates a device capable of "sliding" between alternate realities, and takes his crusty professor, his techie love interest and a passing soul singer on a jaunt into a parallel Earth. The short first season ended on a cliff-hanger, with our hero being shot while escaping from a Utopian Earth's deadly lottery prize. Looks like we'll see the outcome soon...
Turn Ons: Intriguing, well-explored concept.
Turn Offs: The show seems unsure of the age of its target audience.
For more, see feature on page 32.

SPACE: ABOVE AND BEYOND

(Ten-Thirteen)

Genre: science fiction drama.
US Status: Due to debut on Fox this month.
UK Status: Will air in January '96 on Sky 1, and on the BBC later (much later, probably).
Cast & Crew: Created by former *X-Files* executive co-producers and writers Glen Morgan and James Wong, *Space* will be Fox's most expensive series to date. Director David Nutter handles the pilot and may return for later shows. Cast features Rodney Rowland, Morgan Weisser, Kristen Cloke, Joel De La Fuente, Lanei Chapman and James Morrison.
Series Concept: *Star Wars* crossed with *Top Gun*, plus a dash of *Melrose Place*. The year is 2169, and a group of young, untried and untested marine corps starfighter pilots are thrown into the front line of Earth's war with an unseen alien foe. Unsure of each other and in over their heads, the 58th squadron are the only thing standing between the enemy and invasion.
Turn Ons: CGI battle scenes look really cool; young, good-looking cast; Morgan & Wong's high-grade writing talents should save it from being *Battlestar Galactica* for the '90s.
Turn Offs: High SF cliché potential; may be too gung-ho for folks used to gentler SF.
For more, see the interview with creators Glen Morgan and James Wong on page 34.

***Space* stars actors Rodney Rowland and Morgan Weisser.**

None of those "we're-all-mates" cast shots for *Earth 2*.

Filmed on location in the stunning landscapes around Santa Fe and at the local Garson Studios lot in New Mexico, *Earth 2* captured a look and texture that was halfway between *Mad Max* and a classic Western. In concept, however, the series was akin to an SF soap opera, concentrating on a closed community of (at the outset) incompatible characters forced to co-exist with each other...

It starts 200 years into the future, when an overburdened Earth's population is forced to live on spacestations. Devon Adair (Debrah Farentino) organises a colonisation mission to planet G889, the so-called Earth 2, to find a clean new world for herself and her terminally-ill son Ulysses (Joey Zimmerman). Trouble begins when the Eden Advance scout mission crashes on the wrong side of the continent, 3,400 miles away from the verdant New Pacifica region. Stranded and under equipped, Adair and her motley crew of would-be colonists and unwilling starship techs embark on the long trek to the landing site, there to await the main mission. Along the way, they discover

Alonzo Solace (Antonio Sabato Jnr) in smoulder mode.

EXILED TO EDEN

FOR EARTH 2 THE QUEST REMAINS INCOMPLETE...

CREATED BY SPIELBERG'S AMBLIN PRODUCTION COMPANY & UNIVERSAL TELEVISION FOR NBC AS A SUNDAY-NIGHT SF STABLEMATE TO SEAQUEST DSV, EARTH 2 FOCUSED ON A GROUP OF STRANDED COLONISTS STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE ON AN ALIEN WORLD. CANCELLED AFTER ONE SEASON, IT'S DUE TO START ITS RUN ON SKY 1 SOON. **JIM SWALLOW** CHATS TO ONE OF THE SHOW'S STARS, CLANCY BROWN, ABOUT SCIENCE FICTION'S ANSWER TO WAGON TRAIN...

native alien life, human refugees and deadly predators of both persuasions...

Along for the ride as one of Adair's reluctant companions is John Danziger, a single-father technician and mechanic who signed himself and his daughter True (J Madison Wright) on a there-and-back mission to G889. Played by Clancy Brown – best known by genre fans for *Highlander* and *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai* Danziger is one of the pivotal characters.

Recently, SFX asked him about his role in *Earth 2*, and his thoughts about the show. So, who *is* Danzinger?

"He's basically a hired gun," Brown explains, "part of the crew gathered to take this visionary woman on her mission. The thing is, when they shipwreck, he suddenly becomes part of this mission he doesn't want to be on, and part of this vision that he doesn't subscribe to. He has to make the best of it, though, so he does."

As an archetype, Danziger is the tech-head genius common to much action-orientated science fiction, following the legacy of characters like *Star Trek*'s Scotty. "You can draw parallels, and say there is a 'Scotty' antecedent to Danziger," admits Brown, "except that Scotty never had a kid. *Earth 2* does draw from other science fiction shows, but not in a way that you'd expect."

In other words, there's little *Star Trek*-like technobabble. Also unlike *Trek*, the characters find it hard to get on together, which – with such a diverse bunch as Adair and Danziger, a cyborg teacher Yale (Sullivan Walker), government liaison Morgan Martin (John Gegenhauer) and his wife Bess (Rebecca Gayheart), crippled pilot Alonzo Solace (Antonio Sabato Jr) and inexperienced doctor Julia Heller (Jessica Steen) – is hardly surprising. The pressure level is high: if the survivors don't co-operate, they will die. "Nobody here is part of any team," explains Brown. "They're all free agents, but they have to work together."

They certainly do. Alien races like the Terrians (subterranean humanoids capable of influencing dreamstates) and the Grendlers (dwarfish, lizard-like scavengers) dog their journey, and as the season and the cast progress, other factors come to light – it was thought that no humans had visited G889 before, for instance, but perhaps they have. The possibility also arises that the planet's ecosphere may be alive in more than one sense of the word...

Clancy Brown: "There is a Scotty antecedent to Danziger... except he never had a kid."

Although it may not sound like it from the set-up, the cast of *Earth 2* doesn't simply consist of the Eden Advance team and a few aliens. Guest stars include the likes of Brit actor Tim Curry (best known for films like *The Shadow*, *Congo* and, of course, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*) as Gaal, a fellow beached survivor (or so he says) who attempts to sow dissent among the crew, particularly between Danziger and his daughter. Other guest stars include Julius Carry (*The Adventures of Brisco County Jr*) and Terry O'Quinn (*Star Trek: TNG*). Brown sees the constant movement of the show as the most important factor on *Earth 2*: "I wanted to preserve the quest. I didn't think they should be in any hurry to get to their goal... That's the driving force of the whole show. Once you get to that place, the characters change completely."

Locations filmed in the dynamic landscapes around Santa Fe are another of *Earth 2*'s most striking elements, capturing a majestic (if not overly alien) sense of the wild. "It sort of made the job easier," says Brown. "You didn't have to pretend that you were out in the middle of nowhere – the wind and the dust and the sun is hitting you and you have to deal with it. I don't mind that at all!"

"At the end of the pilot, you catch a glimpse of one of the most spectacular sunsets you've ever seen, with storms in the distance and lightning and wind whipping around... It's an overwhelming display of nature."

To be honest, "overwhelming" might be a bit strong. *Earth 2* lasted a mere season before being "suspended" by NBC, with the characters still thousands of miles from New Pacifica and many questions unresolved. While it had proved popular enough to merit a trio of spin-off novels, a second season for the '95-'96 period was not optioned – though it still may be. There's a rumour that ABC are looking at *Earth 2* as a mid-season replacement prospect for 1996, and Brown states very positively that he'd be keen to come back. For now, though, the quest for Adair's "new world" remains incomplete. UK viewers can judge if it should stay that way when the show arrives on Sky.

"You didn't have to pretend you were in the middle of nowhere. The wind, dust and sun is hitting you and you have to deal with it."

Clancy Brown on *Earth 2*'s Santa Fe location footage

SON OF ZEUS

HERCULES, THE SHOW MANY EXPECTED TO FAIL, IS BACK...

ONCE THE NAME HERCULES WOULD HAVE EVOKED CHEESY IMAGES OF A BADLY-DUBBED STEVE REEVES BATTLING SOME PAPIER MÂCHÉ MONSTERS. THAT'S ALL CHANGED, THANKS TO HERCULES: THE LEGENDARY JOURNEYS, ONE OF THE UNEXPECTED TV HITS OF LAST YEAR. AND IT'S SPAWNED A SPIN-OFF THIS SEASON TOO, AS **JOE NAZZARO** DISCOVERS...

Combining action, humour and state-of-the-art CGI work, and shot against the stunning backdrop of New Zealand, *Hercules* features model-turned-actor Kevin Sorbo as the eponymous strongman. It was a formula many expected to fail – and turned out to be a huge success...

Not only has *Hercules* been renewed for a second season, it's also launched a spin-off series, *Xena: Warrior Princess*, starring New Zealand actress Lucy Lawless, who first appeared in three top-rated episodes of *Hercules*' first season. Clearly, something quite extraordinary is going on here.

Of course, bringing a character like the son of Zeus to the small screen without making him laughable must have been quite a challenge. According to *Hercules*' co-executive producer John Schulian, one of the biggest problems in creating a contemporary version of the legendary hero was finding a balance for his dialogue. What do you go for – the mythic or the hip?

"Our feeling was that if you're writing in a very stilted fashion, which is what some of the people we've had write for us tried to do, it sounds awful," he laughs. "We had one immortal line that was never on screen, but will live forever in our imaginations, with a character saying, 'Pipes of Pan, these are but children!' Think about how bad that would have sounded if broadcast!"

Schulian credits a good part of the show's success to leading man Sorbo. "In our harshest moments, we like to think of him as Fabio with talent, and I do not in any sense mean to demean him by saying that. While there are any number of other guys who can run and jump and do all that stuff, Kevin is able to tap into all sorts of other areas."

Although no Arnie, Kevin Sorbo has proved to be a very popular Hercules – good enough for the show, which has yet to be taken up by a UK broadcaster, to romp to season three...

"The monsters are one of our biggest calling cards, but they're also expensive and time consuming. It's an art, and our CGI people are really artists."

***Hercules* producer John Schulian**

Another strong point of the series is its spectacular mythological beasts, created by Kevin O'Neill's visual effects team. "We have to be very careful about using the monsters," says Schulian. "We know they're one of our biggest calling cards, but they're also expensive and time-consuming. That's why we started shooting in April for the next season, just so we'd have enough time to do things, like getting the centaurs right. It's an art, and our CGI people really are artists."

Of course, there could be reasons other than Sorbo for the show's success...

Among this season's creations are a giant eel that menaces Hercules and guest star Bruce Campbell in "The King of Thieves"; a centaur in "The Outcast"; and a tri-tailed snake woman in "The Mother of All Monsters".

"One upcoming episode features a fire monster named Pyro," says Schulian. "They've started shooting it, so I don't know what we've burned down in New Zealand, but it should be spectacular!"

Meanwhile, Schulian's counterpart RJ Stewart is helping establish *Xena* as more than just a female *Hercules*. As Stewart explains, there are some obvious differences, including the fact that Xena will not be getting romantically involved as often as the big guy.

"As unfair as it might be, there is a difference between a male and a female lead – though I think we've found some interesting ways to deal with it," reckons Stewart. "It's quite a challenge, and we're walking very cautiously along that line."

Xena: Warrior Princess starts with Xena (Lucy Lawless) renouncing her warlike ways, and trying to make amends for her past sins. While defending a peasant village from a group of soldiers sent by the warlord Draco, she meets Gabrielle (Renee O'Connor), a spirited young woman who decides to follow the warrior princess on her adventures.

As with its parent series, *Xena* will have no shortage of mythological characters. In the pilot "Sins of the Past," the characters encounter a man-eating Cyclops, and in another, Gabrielle accidentally revives the ancient Titans.

"There's an episode called 'The Cradle of Hope'," says Stewart, "where Xena and Gabrielle run into Pandora's great-great-great-granddaughter, who still has the box. The myth is that the only thing left in the box is hope, and the story is tied in with a young baby. It's a beautiful episode. Then there's one that our supervising producer, Steve Sears, wrote, about a mystic cult that is involved with Morpheus, the god of sleep, in which Xena has to enter her dream world, where she confronts a lot of her past and old memories.

"Right now, we're filming an episode called 'Chariots of War,' and there's some sensational stuff we're doing with chariots in that one. It's amazing what they doing down in New Zealand. When was the last time a TV show did anything with chariots, if ever?"

Both *Hercules* and *Xena* have been commissioned for 22 episodes, with the shows running back-to-back Stateside. As for the inevitable rematch between hero and heroine: "We're definitely planning to do a crossover episode," says Stewart. "I'm actually looking at the script on my computer right now..."

Space Precinct: Another season is unlikely...

SPACE PRECINCT
(Mentorn Films)

Genre: Science fiction drama.
US status: The first season earned a mixed reaction in the USA, not helped by being hidden away in the wee small hours on many stations. No news on whether there'll be a second series yet, but it looks unlikely – Gerry Anderson is, after all, heavily involved in the possible *Thunderbirds* movie now.
UK status: Performed well in its Saturday tea-time slot on Sky (well enough, indeed, for BSkyB to allegedly commit to stumping up a healthy proportion of funding for a second season, should it ever happen). Started showing on the BBC this month, so the real popularity test has begun.
Cast & Crew: Producer and creator Gerry Anderson; executive producer Tom Gutteridge; directors included John Glenn, of Bond film fame; cast included Ted Shackleford, Rob Youngblood and Simone Bendix.
Series Concept: *Hill Street Blues* meets *The Muppets*. Throwing anything approaching a realistic science fiction concept out of the window, Gerry Anderson's latest, most expensive, project always had a touch of schizophrenia to it (is it meant to be a kids' show? An adult show? Or what?), but can often be enjoyable for all that. Plots, characterisation and scripts are sometimes terrible, but the plots always move fast, and the special effects – giving the thing a sort of budget *Blade Runner* look – are sometimes ridiculously brilliant. Plenty of explosions too, as you'd expect from an Anderson show. If it ever does get to a second series, however, expect cast changes. Rumour has it that most of the main stars became unhappy working on the show, and seem unlikely to return.
Turn Ons: Fast action, lots of exceptionally good special effects, silly/funny alien cops and a rather tasty heroine...
Turn Offs: Kind of ludicrous mix of styles; some terrible stories; cramped sets; and it often has a rushed look about it.
For more, see interview on page 38.

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE
(Paramount)

Genre: Science fiction drama.
US Status: Fourth season has entered production; due to air in the US later this year (latest report – October).
UK Status: Third season currently airing on Sky; first season due to air on BBC 2 in the future (when *The Next Gen* has finished its run); first and second seasons available on video, with the third currently being released.
Cast & Crew: Executive producers Rick Berman and Michael Piller; starring Avery Brooks, Rene Auberjonois, Siddig El Fadil, Terry Farrell, Cirroc Lofton, Colm Meaney, Armin Shimerman, Nana Visitor, and, from season three, a certain Mr Dorn...
Series Concept: The new season promises a bigger and bolder *DS9*. Following the arrival of a new threat from the Gamma Quadrant (in the form of the Dominion), the introduction of the starship Defiant, and the increasing political machinations on Bajor – all developments from season two – the DS9 crew are caught in the middle of stormy waters. And things look certain to get worse...

The big noise at the moment is, of course, the arrival of actor Michael Dorn, here to reprise his *Next Generation* role as the Klingon

Avery Brooks, looking like he's back on *Spencer For Hire*...

Boldly going where other *Trek* stories have gone before, *Voyager*'s producers promise more action in season two.

Starfleet officer, Worf, and who looks likely to remain with the show for the duration. Sisko is also a Captain now (following his promotion in the season three finale episode) and now sports an even more severe haircut. More intrigue with the Klingons is promised, and two new Defiant sets have been built. All of which seems to support the rumoured split-story concept, setting some shows on DS9 and some on the warship Defiant.
Turn Ons: Recent episodes show a little more mettle than the often tepid first two seasons, and characterisation is improving.
Turn Offs: The danger is that Paramount's plans to alter the show's concept may not fix much – what really matters is scripts, and until now *DS9* stories have been too soap-opera-like, and not adventurous enough. Genuine science fiction concepts are few and far between.
See the Michael Dorn interview on page 40.

STAR TREK: VOYAGER
(Paramount)

Genre: Science fiction drama.
US Status: Second season in production.
UK Status: First season set to air on Sky from 22 October onwards; first season currently being released on video.
Cast & Crew: Executive producers Rick Berman, Michael Piller and Jeri Taylor; starring Kate Mulgrew, Robert Beltran, Robert Duncan McNeill, Jennifer Lien, Ethan Phillips, Robert Picardo, Tim Russ, Garret Wang and Roxann Biggs-Dawson.
Series Concept: *Star Trek* meets *Lost in Space*. In season one, Captain Janeway and her half-Federation, half-Maquis renegade crew were dropkicked across the galaxy and into the Delta Quadrant, where they must work together to find a way home. Despite the recent hoo-hah about *Voyager*'s ratings being lower than *Next Generation*'s, the series performed twice as well as fledgling network UPN's other dramas – well enough, in fact, for it to be the only survivor of UPN's surprise series purge earlier this year. Like its PTEN rival *Babylon 5*, the last four episodes of this season have been held back for airing in the Autumn as a lead in to season two. Changes-wise, the Voyager will gain some additional new sets for the second year. Fears that Mulgrew was to leave seem to have subsided.
Turn Ons: A new, fresh spin to the *Trek* universe, with a cast of interesting (if largely unoriginal) characters.
Turn Offs: The basic series concept isn't anything new; has a tendency to shamelessly re-use old *Star Trek* plots.
See interview Jeri Taylor on page 42.

TEKWAR
(Atlantis Films)

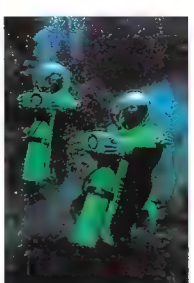
Genre: Science fiction drama
US Status: Cancelled after one season and several TV movies.
UK Status: TV movies available on video; Sky may air them this year.
Cast & Crew: Executive producers William Shatner and Peter Sussman; starring Greg Evigan, William Shatner, Eugene Clark and Natalie Radford.
Series Concept: *TJ Hooker* in the 21st Century. Based on Shatner's book saga, once-disgraced-but-then-cleared-his-name future cop Jake Cardigan joins the Cosmos Detective Agency, run by shady powermonger Bascom, to hunt down drug-runners dealing in Tek, an addictive virtual reality program. The four TV movies – "TekWar", "TekLords", "TekLab" and "TekJustice" – are available here in the UK on video (and reviewed in *SFX*3), but it's unclear if the series will follow. More like *Starsky and Hutch* than *Blade Runner*, Shatner's police actioner scored well enough among SF fans to draw in a weekly slot, but ratings on the USA Network didn't hold up past a single season.
Turn Ons: Snappy action scenes; some cool special effects; Shatner in supreme ham mode.
Turn Offs: Tries hard to be cyberpunk, but it's just too lightweight and unfuturistic. Occasionally completely laughable. Worth watching only in a *Plan 9* kind of a way...

Greg Evigan plays the improbably-named Jake Cardigan.

STORMY

The crew of the *seaQuest* for the make-or-break third season of the show.

SEASON ONE WAS SERIOUS, SENSIBLE AND ECO-CONSCIOUS – BUT IT HARDLY SET THE WORLD ALIGHT, RATINGS-WISE. SEASON TWO WAS SILLY, OVER-THE-TOP, AND "SEXIER" – BUT DROVE SOME CRITICS AND FANS WILD. NOW, FOR SEASON THREE, IT'S ALL CHANGE AGAIN, WITH A JUMP TEN YEARS INTO THE FUTURE AND PLENTY OF FRESH CAST MEMBERS – INCLUDING A NEW CAPTAIN. **JIM SWALLOW** TALKS TO EXECUTIVE PRODUCER PATRICK HASBURGH, AND ASKS, "HAS SEAQUEST DSV GOT IT RIGHT THIS TIME?"



While outfits like this really exist now, science fact was largely absent from the second season of *seaQuest DSV*.

In the two years since its debut on NBC, *seaQuest DSV* has found itself sailing through some pretty choppy waters. First, it was knocked by pundits on its opening night as a hi-tech rip-off of the ancient *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*; later it was slammed when it lost its early lead mid-season; finally, critics thoroughly torpedoed it when the show was retooled – alienating many hardcore fans – for its second year. Not to put too fine a point on it, things were looking bleak by the end of the season two...

It was a sorry sequence of events, and all the more unexpected considering the quality of talent working on the project – *seaQuest* had been created by *Alien Nation* and *Twilight Zone* writer Rockne O'Bannon, before passing through Amblin's head honcho Steven Spielberg, so its creative pedigree was impeccable. The green-orientated first season had earned consistent but unspectacular ratings too – although not consistent enough for MCA Universal, who altered the show's premise for season two, adding more fantasy-orientated SF ("childish trash" according to Scheider), and replacing several cast members with younger, "sexier" actors. Boosted ratings were eagerly expected.

They didn't happen. Instead, season two angered both fans and critics, which makes it all the more surprising that the show has made the grade and returned for a third year at all. Once again, we're promised cast changes and alterations in "thematic direction," but will the show score third time round? SFX asked executive producer Patrick Hasburgh for a few words on what lies ahead.

"I think *seaQuest* has always been a terrific idea for a television series," he insists. "I find it a fascinating concept that the oceans are the last, grand Wild West of the planet."

Hasburgh's work on season three *isn't* his first time on the show. Originally

WATER,

IS IT THIRD TIME LUCKY FOR SEAQUEST DSV?

Michael (*Total Recall*) Ironside joins the crew as the new Captain of the super-sub.

brought aboard during season one, Hasburgh joined the production team mid-season to work on the first of the show's many changes of direction. Doubling as a writer, he penning several episodes during the first two years ("Whale Song" and "The Stinger" spring to mind) – a task that came fairly naturally to him. He had, after all, previously written for things like *The Greatest American Hero* and *The A-Team*. Of his work on the altered second season, he felt that, "We were in the business of changing the tyres on a moving car, and it was hard... All in all, though, I think some of our best episodes came out of season two – but possibly some of our worst as well."

The climactic episode of season two – "Splashdown" – certainly provides a hard act to follow for season three's 90-minute opening salvo, "Brave New World". The final year two show had the seaQuest and her crew abducted by an alien starship (in a scene reminiscent of the climax of *Cocoon*) and taken to the planet Hyperion, a world covered by water, where a war is in progress and the seaQuest is press-ganged into assisting.

Like the explosive ender to year one ("Higher Power"), when seaQuest Mk 1 was destroyed by diving into a magma fissure in order to stop a catastrophic earthquake, "Splashdown"'s last act found seaQuest Mk 2 apparently lost with all hands, save for teen hacker Lucas Wolenczak (Jonathan Brandis) adrift in a liferaft. "Brave New World" picks up 10 years on, circa 2032, when Lucas is found at sea on Earth with no memory of how he got there, where the other crew are or why he hasn't aged. Soon, the rest of the crew begin to reappear in unexpected places, brought together by UEO Captain Oliver Hudson (Michael Ironside), and the truth slowly becomes clear.

Like season two's retooling for a "younger, fitter" generation, season three sees more additions and deletions. Most noticeable is the departure of series lead Roy Scheider as Captain Nathan Bridger, and his replacement by Michael Ironside, fresh from his stint on *ER*, to play seaQuest's new commanding officer, Captain Oliver Hudson. Scheider was quite vocal during the '94-'95 season in his displeasure with the show's move away from plausible SF to more fantastical adventures, and in this light his departure is perhaps not unexpected. While the Bridger character may return in future episodes (Scheider has a six-show "special guest star" option), his promotion to Admiral and the newly introduced plot thread of his search for his MIA son means that a permanent place on *seaQuest* is unlikely. The new Captain Hudson will be a tough, no-nonsense commander out to whip the easy-going seaQuest crew into spit-and-polish shape. Clearly, the *seaQuest* writers plan to highlight the interpersonal character drama the new boss will create among the established crew.

"I see Hudson as a career officer with an edgy, tough approach to a complex, dangerous and exciting world," says Hasburgh. "The kind of guy who will kick ass and take names later."

Bridger's departure will also mean a farewell to possibly the most alien supporting character on TV, Darwin the dolphin, as budgetary cutbacks mean the costly CGI and animatronics needed to create the illusion will be lost. Gone too are the characters of Miguel Ortiz (played by Marco Sanchez) and Dr Wendy Smith (Rosalind Allen). Written out of the show as casualties of the alien war in "Splashdown," Sanchez left to seek other roles, while Allen's contract was not renewed after her character was blasted by fans and critics as being a too obvious attempt to introduce a "*Baywatch* babe" to the seaQuest crew. Hasburgh says that the role of ship's doctor will become an irregular one, likely to be assigned to a recurring bit-actor.

New to the show, however, is a female crewmember named Lieutenant Fredricks (Elise Neil), pilot of the Spectre SFA-2 – a submersible "stealth" combat fighter, assigned to seaQuest for protection. "That's not to say it'll be *Top Gun* underwater, or even *Crimson Tide* or *Das Boot*," Hasburgh insists, "but we'll certainly have those elements at times."

"I see the future as being like *Blade Runner* or *Mad Max*, with the seas being places of vast resources and opportunities, action and adventure."

Patrick Hasburgh, *seaQuest* executive producer

Changes will also be afoot for the remaining crew (Ford, Henderson, O'Neill, Brody and Piccolo) as they adjust to the new Captain. Certainly, Dagwood – the gene-engineered janitor – and Lucas will become de facto UEO crew, the latter getting a promotion to Junior Science Officer and the rank of Ensign, and quickly have to deal with earbashings about haircuts and discipline from Hudson. A planned addition – still unconfirmed at this time of writing – is the return of a character from season one, the wisecracking supply and morale officer Benjamin Krieg (played by John D'Aquino). Krieg is due to return in an early season three episode, living a new life as a homesteader on an adrift iceberg, and actor D'Aquino has been offered the chance to return as a series regular. As Hasburgh explains, in earlier seasons, "there was such a damn large cast, by the time everyone got three lines of dialogue the show was over! So we've pared it down a bit."

Changes to the cast are by no means the only modifications to the new series. A whole new world awaits the crew as they come home to an Earth 10 years older than the one they're used to. Hasburgh sees it thus: "If the oceans are truly the Wild West, they will have their versions of range wars, territorial rights and stagecoach robbers... I felt that was an interesting way to go. I saw the future being like *Blade Runner* or *Mad Max*, with the seas being places of vast resources, opportunities, action and adventure."

Hasburgh promises greater use of CGI to create the illusion of a future world, and cites cyberpunk author William Gibson as an influence on his story ideas. In 2032, the enemies will no longer be countries or territories bound by maps, but giant megacorporations out to exploit the resources of the world. Personifying this new villainy will be actor Michael York, playing ruthless corporate magnate Larry Dion, leader of a band of Techno Pirates and the recurring bad guy. Dion and his octopus-like corporation will become the crux of a story arc throughout the show. "Our villains will be more of a continuing nature, appearing in a number of episodes throughout the season, as opposed to one-offs," says Hasburgh.

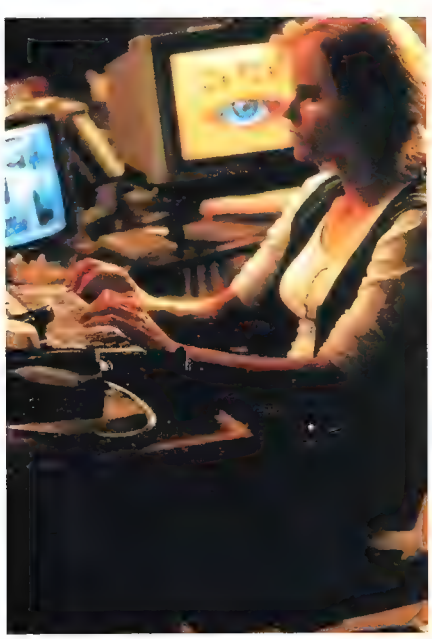
To sum up, then, it's all-change for *seaQuest* once again. While many SF TV watchers see these latest alterations as sounding the show's death knell, others predict that the new changes might be just what *seaQuest*'s been searching for all along. Certainly, it's unlikely to get a fourth chance to get it right...

Peter (son of Dom) DeLuise returns as the genetically engineered janitor, Dagwood.

VR.5

(Samoset Production and Rysher Entertainment)

Genre: Science fiction drama.
US Status: Cancelled after one half-season.
UK Status: Due to air on Sky 1 when re-runs of the first *X-Files* season finish; the BBC apparently has the rights to show it after Sky, but has not set a broadcast date yet.
Cast & Crew: Created by Thania St John, Michael Katleman, Geoffrey Hemwell, Jeannine Renshaw and Adam Cherry; executive producer John Sacret Young; starring Lori Singer, David McCallum, Louise Fletcher, Anthony Head (from the coffee ads!) and Michael Easton.
Series Concept: *Nikita* meets *Wargames*. Withdrawn hacker Sydney Bloom accidently discovers she can control people's minds through her virtual reality system, but is soon recruited by a shadowy government agency called The Committee, who may be reponsible in some way for her father's disappearance and her mother's comatose state. Despite high fan response and reasonable viewer ratings, Fox decided not to continue with the show, but it may be brought back if international and syndication sales are strong enough.
Turn Ons: An unusual and interesting concept, with some decent elements of intrigue and genuinely odd moments.
Turn Offs: The show takes a few episodes to find its feet; science gaffs abound and technobabble is everywhere.
For more, see feature on page 44.



Lori (*Fame*) Singer swaps her cello for a computer keyboard.

SLIDE'S ON

SLIDERS, TV'S FIRST PARALLEL WORLDS SHOW, GETS A REPRIEVE

"PARALLEL UNIVERSE" STORIES – EXPLORING MODIFIED VERSIONS OF OUR OWN WORLD, WHERE THINGS ARE SUBTLY, SOMETIMES HORRIBLY, DIFFERENT – HAVE LONG BEEN A STAPLE OF WRITTEN SF. THEY'RE UNUSUAL ON TV, HOWEVER, WHICH MAKES SLIDERS – ONCE CANCELLED, NOW REVIVED, AND DUE TO BE SHOWN ON SKY SOON – A WELCOME RARITY. **JIM SWALLOW** INVESTIGATES...

Novels like Philip K Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, and the recent *Fatherland*, are classic examples of the "Nazis win WW2" idea that's become a classic "tag" for parallel world stories. But despite the large number of literary alternate dimensions on offer, there have never been a great many movie or television takes on the idea. Sure, *The Twilight Zone* dabbled (as it did with with almost every other SF sub-genre), and *Star Trek* and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* had their flings, but *Sliders* is the first show to use the concept as its central theme.

Sliders was created by Robert K Weiss and Tracy Torme – veterans of things like *Star Trek: TNG*, *Weird Science*, *Intruders*, *Eerie, Indiana* and *Fire in the Sky* – and first aired on the Fox Network in March this year. The core cast, like those of *The Time Tunnel* and *Fantastic Journey* before it, are wanderers, cast adrift in a universe of infinite parallels, with only a single chance each week to escape. They travel between worlds thanks to the "sliding" device created by the lead character Quinn Mallory, played by Jerry O'Connell of *Stand By Me* fame.

The set-up's simple. Mallory's the accidental genius who creates the doorway into another Earth, dragging along for the ride his arrogant, self-serving professor Maximillian Arturo (John Rhys-Davies), the hacker wizard Wade Wells (Sabrina Lloyd) and the evocatively-named Rembrant Brown (Cleavant Derricks), a down-at-heel sax player accidentally pulled into the first slide. The archetypes are set up from the start – the Quinn-Wade love interest subplot, the manipulative Arturo (read: Dr Zachary Smith), and the "outsider" Rembrant, who has no technical knowledge and must have confusing plot-points explained to him.

Lost in space-time, the *Sliders* travel from world to world in search of home, along the way touching base on other paths of history – including an occupied America (shades of *Red Dawn*), a British States of America, a sex-roles-reversed world, an Earth where intellectuals are treated in the same way as sports stars and even one where Elvis lives...

Despite high ratings in the youth market, Fox cancelled *Sliders* after just nine episodes – remarkably early, and, it's generally agreed, unfairly – ending the series on a cliffhanger, with Mallory apparently fatally shot while sliding out of a Utopian world where winning the lottery is a death sentence.

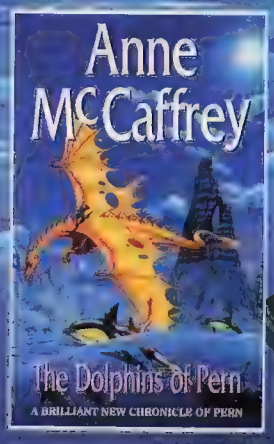
Still, all was not lost, and the network eventually granted the series an eleventh-hour reprieve as a mid-season replacement. The new season will start filming in January, while we in the UK will be able to see the first season on Sky One shortly. Few shows get given a second chance like this, so let's hope the producers don't waste it...

L-R: Cleavant Derricks, Sabrina Lloyd, John Rhys-Davies and Jerry O'Connell (twice).

"*Sliders* is the first television show ever to use the alternative worlds idea as its central theme."

One of *Sliders'* main problems was working out exactly who it was aimed at.

Surf the waves of an extraordinary imagination



and spend some time with The Dolphins of Pern

ANNE McCAFFREY'S

LATEST CHRONICLE OF PERN IS OUT NOW IN CORGI PAPERBACK

CORGI

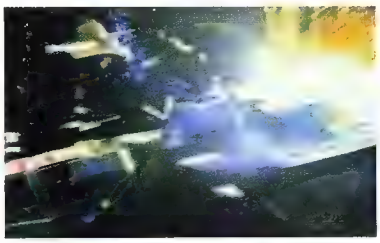
XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS

(Renaissance Pictures)

Genre: Fantasy adventure.
US Status: First season under production, and due to air on syndicated TV in September, running back-to-back with *Hercules*.
UK Status: Unknown.
Cast & Crew: Executive producers Sam Raimi and Robert Tapert; starring Lucy Lawless.
Series Concept: *Hercules: The Spin-Off*. If you liked *Red Sonja*, you'll be in heaven here. After a handful of co-star appearances with Hercules in *The Legendary Journeys*, the warrior princess Xena has gone from baddie to ally, with enough fan response to warrant a show of her own. Along with a runaway named Gabrielle and an acrobat named Pan, Xena's quest in the new series will be to defeat Kahn The Great, an evil warrior king.
Turn Ons: She's a babe with a bloody big sword. Not 'alf bad.
Turn Offs: Spin-offs never seem to be half as good as the original.
For more, see interview with producer RJ Stewart on page 28.

Yikes! She looks hard! Lucy Lawless stars as Xena.

Excerpts from the trailer, which is currently whetting the appetites of viewers in the States.



ENTERING A FUTURISTIC VIETNAM WITH

THE FIRST SEASON OF SPACE: ABOVE AND BEYOND, THE BRAINCHILD OF EX-X-FILES WRITER/PRODUCERS GLEN MORGAN AND JAMES WONG, IS CURRENTLY BEING SHOT IN AMERICA. **JOE NAZZARO** TALKS TO THE BOYS ABOUT THEIR LATEST PROJECT, A SORT OF TOP GUN MEETS FULL METAL JACKET IN SPACE...

Okay, here's the situation: You're two well-established TV writers, just brought over to Fox on a two-year development deal, when the president of the studio asks you to create a brand new SF series along the lines of *Top Gun* in space. Now, what do you do if the high-flying Tom Cruise actioner isn't exactly your favourite film? Well, if you're Glen Morgan and James Wong, you simply come up with something different...

"We'd taken a class in college that we really liked, called 'The Fiction of War,'" says *Space: Above and Beyond*'s co-creator Glen Morgan. "We read everything from *The Iliad* to *Catch 22* to *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *The Red Badge of Courage* – even *The Forever War* by Haldeman – and, basically, we decided to do *The World at War*.

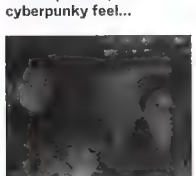
"For a long time, people had avoided doing action on television," continues Morgan, who, along with his partner James Wong, worked on scripts for such eclectic fare as *21 Jump Street*, *The Commish* and several critically acclaimed episodes of *The X-Files*. "They would say, 'Why watch a TV show with action? You're competing against *Terminator 2* and the *Die Hard* movies.' What we've tried to do is focus on our characters, so the action may not be as big, but people will become involved with the characters."

Space: Above and Beyond debuts Stateside in September with a two-hour pilot movie, followed by a weekly series. The year is 2063, and mankind has started to colonise other worlds. "It's about Nathan West (Morgan Weisser), who's going into space to be a colonist with Kyla, this girl he loves very much," explains Morgan. "On the day of the launch, they're told that there is a directive from the Senate, that 10 'In Vitros' [see below] have to be on board or they'll scrub the mission. It's a sort of affirmative action program. The governor of the Tellus Colony says, 'I hate to tell you, but one of you isn't going.' It's a horrible situation, and Nathan tries to stow away. He's caught, thrown off the rocket, and Kyla goes off into space.

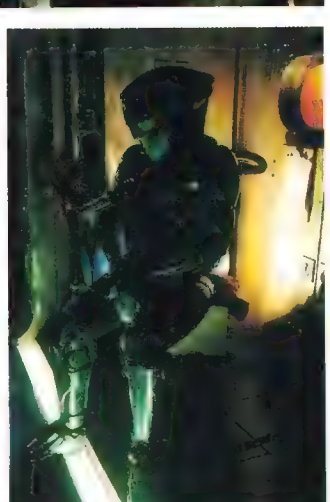
"Meanwhile, Nathan's been told his colonial certificate is good for transfer into the Marine Corps Aviator Academy. Word is, the Marines are going to become sentries for the Tellus colony, so maybe that's a way he can get back in contact with Kyla. Nathan is thinking, 'This is stupid, we're at peace,' but he joins in, believing it his best hope to make contact with Kyla. As the ship taking the colonists to Tellus is about to land, it is attacked by an alien race. When word comes back that some of the colonists have survived the story becomes one about this guy

The young, insufferably good-looking cast won't do the show's viewing figures any harm...

***Space: Above and Beyond* is going for an action-packed, cyberpunky feel...**



...but that costs. It's sometimes described as the most expensive show ever produced by Fox.



SPACE WARS

SPACE: ABOVE AND BEYOND

Shane Vance (Kristen Cloke) and Nathan West (Morgan Weisser), the two leads of *Space*.

trying to hold onto his dream that he'll meet his girl again."

Not that the show will concentrate on Nathan and Kyla, as Morgan explains:

"The main female character is called Shane Vance (played by Kristen Cloke). Her parents, killed in a previous war, were marine corps officers, so she's doing this job to close the circle.

"Cooper Hawke (Rodney Rowland) is what's known as an 'In Vitro', or 'tank'. They were raised in-vitro to be so diers, and the only thing that differentiates them from human beings is a navel on the back of their necks. As a new race, there's prejudice against them. Early in the pilot, for example, there's a lynching scene where some guys are trying to hang Cooper, and when he tries to get back at them, the cops arrive and throw him in jail. He's then sentenced to the military. This is a guy who's never had a family and is now in the middle of all these people."

In addition to the three main characters, the two-hour pilot also introduces fellow recruits Vanessa Damphousse and Paul Wang, as well as McQueen, commander of the 58th Squadron. "Damphousse (Lanei Chapman) is still relatively undefined,' says Wong, "but we know she has a relationship on Earth with someone who has a child. She's a kind of fix-it person. She was stationed at a nuclear reactor when she was on Earth, she's educated and she knows mechanical stuff. But she's not like Scotty in *Star Trek*...

"Joe. Dan La Fuente, the actor who plays Wang, is very good with humour, so we've given his character some of the lighter moments. He's a sports nut, and in one episode, he sneaks his bag on a mission. When he opens it up we find he's brought a football with him. He says to Damphousse, 'I've been waiting forever for this: a planet with gravity two-thirds that of Earth!' and he throws this football and it goes on forever. He's good source of comic relief, but I'm sure we'll get into deeper, more personal things eventually."

And their leader?

"McQueen (James Morrison) is the father figure of our group. He's going to give the 58th their assignments, and through his experiences he's hopefully going to teach them what he's learned. Our people are going to learn from their own adventures, but he certainly has more experience and a mature way of looking at things. The fact that he's an In Vitro is an interesting adjunct to that, and something to play off. If Cooper is this rebellious kind of person, you can almost see McQueen as someone who's gone through it and come out the other side. I think he's going to be a really interesting character."

Finally, there's Sgt Major Bougus, the marines' ass-kicking drill sergeant, played by R Lee Ermey. According to Wong, their prototype for Bougus was Ermey's Golden Globe-nominated character from Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*.

"We thought he was great, and the rhythms he spoke with were so real, we had to get somebody like him. After several weeks of trying to cast the right guy, we still couldn't somebody, and finally we said, 'Why don't we just hire R Lee Ermey?' We had stayed away from that because we were afraid of playing the *Full Metal Jacket* thing again, but then we thought, 'Well, we're playing the *Full Metal Jacket* thing anyway; let's just go with it.' And we're happy we did, because he was just terrific. Ermey was a marine drill instructor who went to Vietnam on three tours, and mostly people can't usually stand two, so he's quite a character.'

Of course, no alien invasion scenario would be complete without aliens. While the invaders play a major part in the series, Wong cautions viewers not to expect too much information about them in the first few episodes. He wants us to find out about them "piece by piece."

"For instance," he explains, "there's a survivor from the Tellus Colony who we talk to. We'll keep revealing little things until, hopefully, the end of the first season, when there will be a major revelation about the aliens. I think we can keep up the mystery and reveal cool stuff about them. It's an interesting dilemma."

Another group that will be making their presence felt are the artificial intelligence beings (A.I.), who figure heavily in Shane's back story. Says Wong: "They were originally made to serve, but were given a computer virus by a disgruntled scientist, and so rebelled. Now they're pirates in space whose only allegiance is to themselves, so in one episode they're the enemy, but in the next, they could be uneasy friends.

"The A.I.s are humanoids who were originally designed to be pleasing to the eye, but during the rebellion they've gotten torn up, so you can see the mechanics underneath their skin. Although they might be compared to the Borg or the replicants from *Blade Runner*, it's how our actors play them that makes them different. For instance, with the A.I.s, the virus the scientist gave them was a very simple statement: 'Take a chance.'

"Now the only one of man's creations which the A.I.s revere is gambling. We have a scene where our guys are playing blackjack for their lives, and it's those elements that make the characters different."

As for the tone of the series, its creators says it's not just "*The X-Files* set in space," as some might have expected.

"I think our tone is more intense action-adventure," says Wong. "It's a character study of people under pressure, and it's an action-adventure show set in the future, so you have dogfights in space, aliens and other weird stuff. The backbone is 'We're at war' more than anything else."

When Morgan and Wong got the go- ahead to film the *Space* pilot, they turned to David Nutter, who they'd collaborated with on some of *The X-Files* most striking episodes, to help out.

'I don't think I'm the kind of director who has a style," explains Nutter, "so the script for a particular piece helps lend

"The A.I.s were originally designed to be pleasing to the eye, but during the rebellion they've gotten torn up, so you can see the mechanics underneath the skin."

James Wong, executive producer

Morgan Weisser is Nathan West, who joins the Marine Corps Aviator Academy in the pilot episode of *Space*.

that style, in a sense, to me. When I read the pilot's script, I saw this was not an SF future – not a future that we can't relate to, or that's inaccessible. We wanted this future to be accessible, and, in many ways, retro – to get away from that *Star Trek* situation, with people dressed in tight polyester suits and no shadows, darkness or grime.

"Basically, we wanted to make this future as near to what's happening now as possible, because if you look at a lot of things, they really haven't changed that much in the last 100 years. A chair is still a chair, so we're going for that kind of atmosphere."

There certainly seems to be quite a lot of the old World War 2 films in the things you're trying to do...

"Yeah, I drew upon films like *Twelve O'Clock High*, and those sort of World War 2 films – but also things like *Outland*, where they really grimed things up. In our story, corporate America has run off with all the money for colonising, and the military has basically been left behind. In the army you see more old-fashioned stuff, such as the space carrier, which I refer to as *'Das Boot* in outer space,' and these Hammerhead fighters they're flying in.

"That was the feel I was trying for in the pilot, and I kept it constantly in mind. I looked back at old John Ford films, and tried to make it all large, like they were. I wanted to make a classic story about young people at war, always trying to treat it with as much dignity as possible. I wanted the pilot to have a classic sense to it, like an old Western, giving the audience as large a landscape as possible on a TV screen."

Fox initially ordered 13 episodes of *Space: Above and Beyond*, although its creators hope it'll be successful enough to warrant an additional pick-up. In the meantime, Wong gives SFX a sneak preview of the first half dozen or so adventures:

"In the first episode, 'Farthest Man From Home,' a survivor is discovered on Tellus, the colony that Nathan was supposed to be on, and – even though it's a secret – they've smuggled this insane colonist on board the Saratoga, and Nathan finds a way to talk to him. Though this man's insane, Nathan believes Kyla is still alive, and goes AWOL to try and find her on this alien-occupied planet.

"'The Dark Side of the Sun' deals with Shane's obsession with the A.I.s. The 58th are sent on a sentry mission to a planet, where a component of the fuel used for their spacecraft is mined. A convoy is deployed to pick up this ore, and when our guys are sent to protect it, they're attacked by A.I.s who are also after the ore. The story is basically about how Shane deals with her memories, and what actions she takes against these machines.

"In 'Mutiny,' by Steve Zito, the 58th hitches a ride on a tramp steamer-type space vehicle, and in the cargo are cryogenically frozen humans and In Vitros. The ship's crew consists of humans too – and In Vitros, who do all the dirty work. When the ship comes under attack, loses power and the crew are forced to cut power to some of the frozen cargo, the captain's decision to cut power to the In Vitros sparks a mutiny. Cooper is divided as to what to do.

"'Butts' is actually the name of one of the characters – if you take Martin Sheen in *Apocalypse Now*, and mix it with Jack Nicholson in *The Last Detail*, you'll get an idea of what he's like. He takes the 58th away from McQueen and on a secret mission, so we have a situation where our squadron hates their commander, and rightly so. They learn who he is in this episode, and it's an interesting character study.

"'Fear' has been scripted by Marylyn Osbourne. Our heroes go to a methane planet, and are attacked by an alien weapon that affects you psychologically to a point where the marines ahead of them have killed themselves. It's about how our guys deal with the psychological terror of this weapon.

"There will also be a two-parter with the Trojan Horse idea, using a disabled alien bomber and flying it back to bomb the alien base. They get shot down and placed in a prisoner of war camp in this alien-controlled planet, from which they have to escape."

As *Space: Above and Beyond* gets ready for its initial launch, Morgan and Wong hope viewers will discover more than just another glossy SF series.

"What I really want this to be about is faith," says Morgan. "Not necessarily religious faith, although that's fine, but nowadays officials get elected and – whether you're on the left or the right – you say, 'Okay, this is the guy for me,' and then, in what seems a matter of weeks, they've let you down. That's why we went back to the World War 2 films, where there was that mood of 'I'm willing to die for a cause.' That's the element we want to explore.

"For Nathan, it's the hope of getting Kyla back. For Cooper, who's grown up with no family or friends, he suddenly sees people who are willing to do things for others, and he's compelled to feel that way too. We've asked our writers, 'What is this character willing to die in this episode?', and that's what I hope the series will be about."

"I wanted the pilot to have a classic sense to it, like a classic Western, giving the audience as large a landscape as possible."

David Nutter, director of the two-hour *Space* pilot

THE X-FILES
(Ten-Thirteen)

"It's no good getting into a strop – you're only having one episode off to have a baby."

Genre: Spooky mystery drama.
US Status: Third season currently in production; due to air on Fox in September.
UK Status: Second season just completed on Sky, now showing on BBC2; third season will be aired on Sky in 1996; first season currently being released on video.
Cast & Crew: Created by Chris Carter; co-executive producers RW Goodwin, Glen Morgan & James Wong (year one & two); starring David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson; guest starring Mitch Pillegi, William B Davis and Steven Williams.
Series Concept: Oliver Stone's *JFK* meets *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*. After the good start of season one, early season two faltered in some of the "Scully abducted" stories, but got back to full power after actress Gillian Anderson had her baby. The pacey season two finale "Anasazi" – which snared a big 10.0 rating in the USA – promises to be a taster of what will come in season three, which will attempt to expand the show's (and the viewers') definitions of weirdness. An *X-Files* spin-off is in the works, but this is unlikely to see the light of day anytime soon because of creator Chris Carter's heavy workload on the main show. A movie version is also on the cards (though Gillian Anderson isn't too keen on doing one until the show finally wraps for good).
Turn Ons: One of the most consistently high quality genre shows of recent years, with an excellent cast and many well-written stories.
Turn Offs: Some duff episodes, with gaping plot holes and ideas high on the "hoke" scale; but even at its worst it's still one of the best of the current US TV crop.

"Here, take this, mate. The rash'll clear up in no time at all."

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THE FINAL PROGRAMMES

AS WELL AS THE MAJOR NEW SERIES COVERED ABOVE, THE AIRWAVES ARE POSITIVELY AGLOW WITH OTHER GENRE SHOWS – PILOTS, MINI SERIES AND REGULAR SERIES – IN VARIOUS STATES OF WELL-BEING. BUT WHICH ONES WILL FLOAT, AND WHICH WILL SINK, IN THE MONTHS TO COME?

The cop-show starring *Quantum Leap*'s Scott Bakula, *Prowler*, has not gone beyond a pilot. The series was touted as featuring "investigations into cases of the macabre," but Bakula himself dismissed this as hype slapped on to create interest in what's really just a dark and grim police story. Meanwhile, the planned *Quantum Leap* cartoon series is still in production, although it is not known if Bakula will voice the character of Sam Beckett...

Aaron Spelling takes his *Beverly Hills 90210* idea, and gives it a *Lost Boys* spin with *Kindred: The Embraced*, due to arrive soon on Fox in the USA. The series sees San Francisco copper C Thomas Howell drawn into the dark world of modern-day vampires, led by Mark Frankel (star of the abortive James Bond rip-off *Fortune Hunter*). The pilot is directed by Peter Medak (of *Romeo is Bleeding* fame). Perhaps a bit too similar to *Forever Knight* and numerous straight-to-video B-movies for comfort...?

Julian Sands (*Warlock*, *Boxing Helena*) will appear as an android travelling back in time to save humanity in the pilot for CBS' *Tomorrow Man*. The premise recalls the aborted *Star Trek* spin-off *Assignment Earth*, as well as the doomed Irwin Allen project *The Man from the 25th Century* (the omens aren't looking so far, are they?) and at least two classic episodes of the original *Outer Limits*.

If *The Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers* and *VR Troopers* – and other, copycat, shows – weren't enough for you, Saban Entertainment has once more plundered the realms of Japanese Saturday-morning "sentai" (live-action) superhero shows to bring us *Masked Rider*. Originally titled *Kamen Rider Black RX* in Japan, and featuring cool cockroach-like battle armour and motorbikes,

DEMETER CITY BLUE

WORKING WITH ALIENS ON SPACE PRECINCT

SO WHAT'S IT LIKE WORKING ALONGSIDE THE LEGENDARY GERRY ANDERSON, NOT TO MENTION CO-STARS WITH THREE EYES AND BULBOUS HEADS? **JOE NAZZARO** MET ROB YOUNGBLOOD, SPACE PRECINCT'S OFFICER HALDANE, TO FIND OUT.

It's not yer normal acting job, *Space Precinct*. Not when your co-stars often look like this. "It was difficult," admits Rob Youngblood...

According to Rob Youngblood, playing the wise-cracking, lady-killing Jack Haldane in Gerry Anderson's *Space Precinct* wasn't much of an effort.

"I had conversations with Gerry," says the LA-based actor, "and they sent Ted Shackleford and me a little bible about the show, so I had a rough idea where they wanted him to go. Of the two main characters, Haldane was the one who was really gung-ho about taking this job and going to another planet, and pretty much dragged Brogan kicking and screaming with him.

"I think they got pretty lucky in casting, actually, because Ted and I both hit our characters on the head. He was very much like Brogan, and I was a lot like Haldane – which they had no idea about, of course. Also, Ted and I knew each other before, so our relationships on and off the show were very similar."

So did Youngblood have trouble acting alongside *Space Precinct*'s much-publicised animatronic aliens?

"I don't have any problem working with Ted!" he quips, as, a few months ago, we spoke on the set. "Oh, *those* aliens! That was difficult at first. It took some time to figure out where to look.

"But the guys inside the heads do such a wonderful job that I don't even stop to think about it now. For instance, if I'm doing scenes with Captain Podley, I'm seeing Jerome Willis, and they're still his mannerisms and movements. Once we got to know the actors we were able to deal with them, as opposed to regarding them as just a bunch of rubber heads."

"I think they got pretty lucky in casting, because Ted and I both hit our characters on the head..."

Rob Youngblood, alias Jack Haldane

But what about guest aliens played by different actors?

"That doesn't happen," he explains, "We've got a core group of two or three mime artists who play all the other aliens every week. It would actually be impossible for a new actor to come in and learn all that stuff within a few days."

Although Gerry Anderson has been quoted as saying he thinks of *Space Precinct* as a police drama with SF elements, Youngblood reckons otherwise.

"I think it's pretty much an SF show with cop elements. Look, if you turn it on, you're going to see aliens, space ships, and so on – it's an SF show. Sure, it has cop show elements, but when you're in the station with a bunch of cops, and some of them have three eyes, you know it's not your average police show."

Rob Youngblood (top right, top pic) with humans Ted Shackleford and Simone Bendix, and (below) some of his slightly odder colleagues.

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BANDAI

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Saban has once more gone bananas with the editing scissors to bring this action kidvid to an American audience. What's the betting it ends up on GMTV over here?

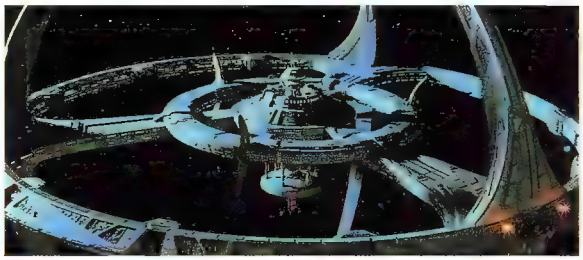
Countdown is the title of a forthcoming NBC four-hour mini-series, set around the first manned mission to Mars circa 2013, and the astronauts' discovery of martian inhabitants... *The Martian Chronicles Revisited*, anyone? Let's hope not.

White Dwarf, the off-beat and generally weird SF medical drama from Francis Ford Coppola (*The Godfather*, *One From The Heart*) and Bruce Wagner (*Wild Palms*), has still not been given the green light to go beyond its pilot episode. The show's introductory story featured bizarre stomach viruses, blood-red oceans, odd aliens and "Wild West" imagery – it may have been simply too odd for even those brave, *X-Files*-supporting execs at Fox, but we can live in hope.

Anthology shows *The Outer Limits* and *Tales from the Crypt* will soon be joined by two new contenders – *Fear Itself*, which numbers action men Shane Black and Renny Harlin among its behind-the-camera stars, and *Weird Tales*, which will open with a three-tier pilot directed by Coppola himself, along with Oliver Stone and Tim Burton... Clive Barker and Peter Atkins (*Hellraiser*) are also along for the ride.

Deadly Games is an SF comedy about a video game designer, Doctor Gus Lloyd (James Calvert) whose villainous arcade creations escape after an anti-matter experiment goes foom. Only he, teamed up with his in-game alter-ego, can stop them. As in a real video game, each episode ends in a battle with the "boss" of each "level," with the baddies played by genre names like LeVar Burton (Geordi in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*), Anthony Michael Hall (*Weird Science*) and Christopher Lloyd (*Back to the Future*) as the supreme villain Sebastian Jackal. With a dash of romantic silliness, *Deadly Games* has already begun airing on UPN at 8pm on Tuesdays. Executive producer on the show is none other than Leonard Nimoy.

Also on UPN is the Disney/Tobe Hooper opus *Nowhere Man*. Touted as a combination of *The Fugitive* and *The Prisoner* spiced up for the '90s, this is a road series about a photographer, Thomas Veil (played by Bruce Greenwood) who shoots something he shouldn't, and then finds his identity erased and bad guys on his trail... (Didn't that happen to Sandra Bullock in *The Net*?) The show has just started airing on Mondays at 9pm in the US,



DEEP SPACE

EVERY SEASON, IT SEEMS, STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE GETS A REVAMP, EACH ONE INTENDED TO TAKE A HIGH QUALITY BUT PATCHY SHOW INTO THE "MUST WATCH" CATEGORY. LAST SEASON, FOR INSTANCE, INTRODUCED THE WARSHIP DEFIANT, AND EXPLORED THE THREAT OF THE DOMINION. THIS TIME ROUND, EVEN BIGGER GUNS ARE BEING BROUGHT INTO PLAY, MOST PROMINENTLY THE ADDITION OF MICHAEL DORN – WORF FROM STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION. **JOE NAZZARO** CAN HARDLY WAIT...

For the last year or so, Michael Dorn has enjoyed – if you'll excuse the expression – the best of both worlds, with a rapidly burgeoning film career to add to his considerable TV work. The year began, of course, with the last episodes of his seven-year run on the hugely successful *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, after which he and his co-stars went straight into production on the movie *Star Trek: Generations*. You'd think a man would want to take a rest after all that – but no. By the time the film was released Stateside, Dorn was already hard at work on other projects, including a couple of SF movies – all *sans* Klingon make-up, thank God.

For Dorn, who's often described the daily hour-and-a-half make-up application required for the Worf character as "a pain in the ass," you'd think going back to the latex again would be less than attractive, but apparently not. After all, he's just signed on for another three-year tour of duty as the Klingon Starfleet officer, this time located aboard the converted Cardassian spacestation Deep Space Nine...

"I was surprised I even considered it," admits Dorn from his dressing room at Paramount Studios, where he's working on "Way of the Warrior," the two-hour opener for *DS9*'s fourth season. "Instead of poo-pooing the idea right away, I said, 'Oh. That's interesting,' and the more I talked to [executive producer] Rick Berman, the more I said, 'That's not a bad deal.' At first it was only a slim chance, almost minuscule, that I might do *Deep Space Nine*, and then only the one show. When we started talking, going back as a regular character was the furthest thing from my mind."

Worf's possible arrival on *Deep Space Nine* was the subject of a great deal of "Will he?/Won't he?" speculation before filming began. *Star Trek* head honcho Rick Berman certainly wasn't tipping his hand, saying only that "a new cast member" would be introduced.

"I think the decision wasn't actually made until a week before we started shooting," explains Dorn. "It was right up until the last minute because of all our negotiations. This time, I didn't stay out of [the negotiating process], but from now on I definitely will – it gets a little too violent in the trenches for me! The guy who was my point man for this is someone I really trust – he wouldn't do anything like say 'yes' or 'no' without consulting me first. Before we went in, we were very clear on the exact terms - they knew what I wanted."

We'll get back to *DS9* in a moment, but Dorn is anxious to discuss some of his other projects, many of which fall squarely within the SF genre. First, there's the SF action-adventure thriller, *Time Master*, with Dorn playing a character he likens to a futuristic Bill Gates.

"I'm sure Bill Gates is probably a lot nicer than I am!" he laughs. "I play a guy called The Chairman, who basically builds this whole arena where people come to bet on the outcome of a virtual reality game. The outcome is that whoever wins, fine, but the loser dies. I set up these scenarios – thermo-nuclear destruction, the holocaust and things like that – just so the people in the arena can bet. It was my first part out of make-up in God knows how many years, so that was nice."

Then there's the movie for cable's Showtime, *Amanda and the Alien*, featuring former *Baywatch* babe Nicole Eggert as a shrinking violet who meets an alien capable of taking over people's bodies. When the alien inhabits the body of Amanda's former boyfriend, their relationship begins to flower, but a determined government agent (Dorn) tracks the couple down as they head for the alien ship.

"I play a guy who I like to think has seen *Pulp Fiction* too many times," says Dorn, whose character dresses in a Tarantino-esque black suit/white shirt/skinny tie get up. "It was an interesting story and well-directed. Stacey Keach and Nicole Eggert were wonderful. I also did an episode of *The Outer Limits* ["The Voyage Home"], in which I played a guy who gets possessed by an alien."

You can't help seeing the link between all these projects. But does Dorn worry about taking so many science fiction roles right after being in *Star Trek*? Isn't there a danger of getting typecast here?

"Well, of course," he readily agrees. "You want to get as far away as you can, but anything out of make-up is a huge step for me, so those projects were fine. If I hadn't gone back to *Deep Space Nine*, I would probably be trying to do more stuff away from the genre, but I really like science fiction. So if I get a call to do something like this, it really doesn't bother me at all."

Another project with which Dorn was associated for a time was a docu-drama on OJ Simpson. Is there

DORN AGAIN

NINE GOES INTO "WORF" DRIVE

"Sisko needs him on board, because he needs somebody who knows the Klingon language, and who understands their psyche inside out."

Michael Dorn, alias Worf, new star of *Star Trek: DS9*

anything to the rumours that Dorn was approached for the lead role?

"Oh yes," he admits. "But I didn't pursue it. I didn't feel right about it, but that's just me. It doesn't mean the guy who did it is wrong – I thought he did a wonderful job – but, personally, I just didn't feel right about it."

Inevitably, despite appearing in quite a range of non-*Trek* projects over recent months, the last time most fans will have seen Dorn is on the big screen – in the *TNG* gang's first feature film (but Dorn's second, having played a Klingon lawyer in *The Undiscovered Country*). The actor's comments on *Star Trek: Generations* – like those of a few of his co-stars have always been somewhat guarded, and although Worf gets a long-awaited promotion in the film's lavish sailing ship opening, the character doesn't really get much of a chance to shine. I take it Dorn would have liked a bit more screen time?

"Well, I'm an actor, for Christ's sake! I think we all wanted the movie to be about us! The thing is, the film was something much bigger than just Worf. They wanted to have the two Captains meet, so they had to have events leading up to that. There just wasn't room for a separate story about Worf. But sure, my comments about the film are guarded, mainly because I don't want what I say to sound like sour grapes."

There's no danger of Worf's presence being overlooked on *Deep Space Nine*, however...

"The premise is that the Klingons have broken with the Federation," says Dorn. "That's it, no more allies, and Worf becomes basically an advisor to Sisko on DS9. I don't want to give everything away, but there's going to be a lot of excitement about Worf coming to the station, particularly in terms of how everyone feels. Some people will like it, some people won't, and, as usual, Worf's going to have his own problems with his sense of who he is. Sisko needs him on board, because he needs somebody who knows the Klingon language, and who understands their psyche inside and out."

Dorn's arrival on *Deep Space Nine* has also caused ructions in the real world, creating something of a split between *TNG* fans, who welcome the new arrival, and die-hard *DSN* viewers, who fear that some of the original cast members may get overlooked in the new Klingon-heavy milieu.

This opinion, however, doesn't seem to be shared by members of *DS9*'s cast and crew. "I just love working with Michael," says fellow *TNG* alumni Robert O'Reilly, whose character the Klingon ruler Gowron – guest-stars in the two-hour opening episode. "In a sense he's my mentor – not as the character, but as an actor playing a Klingon... It was great to work with him again."

Rene Auberjonois, who plays the series' shape-shifting security chief Odo, concurs. "I think Michael joining us is going to bring us a lot of people from *The Next Generation* – people who have really mourned its loss, and have felt that perhaps we were not what they wanted us to be. I think Michael coming in, and the introduction of the Klingons, is going to be good for us."

As for Dorn, he'll take it as it comes, content to let *DS9*'s writing staff come up with the storylines. He does insist that Worf will continue to exhibit typical Klingon reserve with his new co-workers – expect to see Worf less than thrilled working alongside some of the station's inhabitants, for example, such as the shape-shifting Odo, or Quark, the wily Ferengi bartender. He's unlikely to be happy with having to interact with the large Bajoran population either...

Remember, though, the next season of *DS9* isn't all the future holds for Worf. There's the upcoming *TNG* film *Star Trek VIII*, would you believe? – to think about too. When Picard & co. fly off to fight the Borg in their spanking new Enterprise, will they leave Worf waving a teary farewell to his comrades – or will they be making a quick stop-off to pick up a certain passenger at DS9?

At the moment, Michael Dorn isn't sure. "We've talked about it," is all he'll say, "and though I don't know what's going to happen, from where I sit, Worf's going to be in the next movie. I'd love to do it. On the other hand, if it doesn't happen, I'm still working."

And he's right, of course. A word of advice though, Michael. If the Enterprise-E shows up unexpectedly at *DS9*, just make sure your bags are packed...

THE WAY BACK

THE STAR TREK: VOYAGER CREW GET THAT MUCH NEARER HOME...

STAR TREK: VOYAGER – TO MANY PEOPLE, THE TRUE HEIR TO STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION – WAS THE ONE REAL STAR OF THE FLEDGLING UNITED PARAMOUNT NETWORK'S INAUGURAL SEASON. BUT WHAT CAN WE EXPECT TO SEE IN SEASON TWO? AND HOW GOOD WAS SEASON ONE ANYWAY? **JOE NAZZARO** TOUCHES BASE WITH EXECUTIVE PRODUCER JERI TAYLOR FOR THE LATEST...

As co-creator and executive producer of *Star Trek: Voyager*, Jeri Taylor is part of the team that's made the latest *Trek* spin-off series the biggest success of Paramount's new UPN network. As *Voyager* goes back into production – incidentally, one of the few UPN shows to do so – Taylor took time from her hectic schedule to preview the upcoming season for SFX, as well as offer some candid comments on the show's first outing.

"Overall, I'm very pleased with the first season," says Taylor. "The response from the fans was overwhelming. They love these characters, and can't wait to see what happens to them next.

Which all sounds perfect – but of course it can't really be, can it? Surely there were some mistakes made in the first season; some things you'd do differently now?

"Well, I think if there's anything I'd do differently," she says, thinking about it, "it would be to scatter some of our higher-budget, action-adventure shows throughout the season. We front-loaded the first season, and got ourselves in budgetary trouble, so by the latter part of it we were forced into doing a number of 'bottle' shows *[Stories that take place on board the ship – Ed]*, and the result was a number of interior, character-driven stories all being shown together. I'd like to have varied the mix a little."

As with *Babylon 5* and a number of other shows this season, *Voyager* found the last few season one episodes held back as an introduction to season two. That must have been annoying, surely?

"Well, what happened was UPN decided to withhold the last four episodes we'd produced, so instead of our season coming to a close with a season-ender, it effectively ended after episode 16. That was disappointing on one level, but the network wanted to be able to go back on the air early to get a jump on the other networks, so I understood why they did it."

So what can viewers expect from the second season of *Voyager*? Do you have any major changes planned?

"What will happen," explains Taylor, "is we'll première with the show that was meant to be our season-ender, which is called 'The 37s.' It's a high-concept show, with some very cool things happening. We see Voyager land, the first time we've ever seen one of the major starships of *Star Trek* land on a planet. It also has Amelia Earhart in it – it's an action-adventure story, with a lot of heart tug. I think it will play very well.

A scene from "The 37s," the show designed to end season one of *Voyager*, but which will actually kick off season two.

"'The 37s' will be followed by the first show we've produced for the second season, 'Initiations.' It's a very strong Chakotay show, an action adventure yarn, to remind the fans that's what this series is about. Then we go into the bottle shows left from last season. Two of them, I think, are enormously successful. One is 'Projections,' which is about the doctor, and brings the character of Reginald Barclay (played by Dwight Schultz) back in a very creative way. The other is called 'Elogium,' and is basically about Kes going into heat. It really is a wonderful story, and even though these two are actually bottle shows, I think they work well."

Despite a few off-the-wall rumours that the character of Captain Janeway might be written out, Taylor insists the entire cast will be back for the season two.

"I don't know how those things get started," she sighs, "but there's not a grain of truth to it. There wasn't discussion; it wasn't an issue that even came up. It's just completely manufactured and false."

These days, with the benefit of hindsight, how does Jerri Taylor feel about the first season of *Voyager?*

The engines are too small, some say. The main bit looks like a bog-seat, say others. Who cares? It's still a flashy ship...

Unsurprisingly, she reckons there were a number of strong episodes - and a few near-misses.

"In terms of storytelling, I think some of our better characters receded into the background toward the end of the season," Taylor admits, "just because the stories that came along featured other people. We left Chakotay very much underdeveloped; the same with Tom Paris. I think we did Paris a great disservice early in the season by giving him only one personality trait: His womanising. I think he came off a little sleazy, and so we pulled away from that in the latter part of the season, but didn't replace it with anything else, so he just became the guy who flew the ship.

"The same thing happened to a lesser degree with Harry Kim and Tuvok. We've started this season by focusing on stories for those guys, and I think they're really strong. We have a wonderful episode early in the season showing Harry Kim in a sort of unique way, paying a visit to Earth, and I think that's a very cool story."

So which first-season episodes would make their way into a hypothetical Jeri Taylor top ten list?

"I thought 'Eye of the Needle' really touched a chord, and so did 'Prime Factors.' 'Heroes and Demons' was a delightful show, and 'Jetrel' was the kind of thing we don't do a lot of, but when we do it, I think it works – you know, touch on a contemporary issue and give it an SF kind of twist. That story was essentially about the atom bomb, and I think Ethan Phillips did a wonderful job, giving Neelix texture and depth that really helped enrich his character."

Writing a full season of a show like *Voyager* is tough at the best of times, and often done in a remarkably short period of time. Last season, the series got by with a three-person writing staff, so it's understandable that Taylor's pleased the ranks have increased this year. "Michael Piller, whose series *Legend* was cancelled, has come back to us, so that's a much-needed fourth hand. We've also added a staff writer – and I'm delighted to say, a woman named Lisa Klink. It's been a lonely five years for me as the only woman on either staff, and I'm delighted to have Lisa around. She's a young writer, with a great deal of potential."

Taylor is also quick to point out the importance of story editor Ken Biller, whose mark is on a number of first-season scripts. "I decry the fact that the number of originals one writes are an indication of one's star status. Some of the best writing I've ever done has had someone else's name on it, and I know I'm responsible for it, but that's not the way it works. I hope people realise that re-writing is maybe more difficult than writing an original, and we count on every staff member to do their share. Ken, in his first season, has proven himself a player, and I think he's going to be one of the stalwarts of the *Star Trek* universe."

Writer/producer Brannon Braga, who will be co-writing the next *Star Trek* feature film, will be heavily involved too – and Taylor's quite obviously thrilled about the fact. "Rick Berman and I made the arrangement with Ron [Moore] and Brannon that their duties on *Voyager* and *Deep Space Nine* wouldn't suffer at all. That's their first responsibility, and the film is being written in the off hours."

Taylor's own production responsibilities preclude her writing more than a few episodes this season, but all the same, she's trying to keep her hand in.

"I've done one of the first episodes we're producing," she says, "called 'Persistence of Vision,' and it's a wild story about the crew suffering a mass hallucination. I may do another, but it's difficult to take two weeks off to write an original story."

Rumours that Captain Janeway (Kate Mulgrew) would be written out of *Voyager* are "completely false," says Taylor.

Looking to the future, Jeri Taylor says the winning formula behind successful genre shows like *Star Trek: Voyager* is actually quite simple:

"To keep in mind that action-adventure is a popular component, but it's the characters that everybody responds to. At the heart of every good *Star Trek* is a story about people, and we'll continue to do that, as well as look for those nifty, mind-bending provocative SF ideas that intrigue, and provide a variety of stories. I don't ever want the audience to tune in to *Voyager* and know the kind of story they're going to see."

For *Voyager* producer Jeri Taylor, it's important the new season does more justice to characters like Tom Paris.

and had received some very good reviews. And for once, we're not going to have to wait centuries to see the show. Sky 1 was so impressed with what it saw, it has already scheduled *Nowhere Man* to take over the postponed *Sliders* slot in October. This could turn out to be a real sleeper hit, like *The X-Files*.

DB Sweeney stars as Chance Tate, a man with *Strange Luck*, in Fox's new Friday night show. Yet another photographer, Tate just happens to be a "probability magnet," who suffers from intense swings of good and bad luck – such as always winning the lottery, or always being in banks when they get robbed. Not as lightweight as it might sound, the show's running plot is Tate's search for his true identity. (Hang on, does this sound like *Nowhere Man* again?) Tate is helped out by his two 'friends' Pamela Gidley and Frances Fisher. Expect lots of will-they, won't-they interplay.

The classic '60s paranoia show *The Invaders* will return to the small screen, updated to the present day in a four-hour Fox mini-series. Original series star Roy Thinnes will reprise his roll of truth seeker David Vincent. (How about an *X-Files* crossover, eh?)

Time Warrior (no, nothing to do with that old *Doctor Who* story, so don't get too excited) features a scientist from the 25th century, utilising time travel technology to contact a present-day teenager. Sounds ho-hum (and not a little unlike *Terminator* 2 sans Terminator) but you never know...

Hypernauts is a children's SF action series currently in pre-production, created by Ron Thornton, the man behind the spectacular CGI effects on *Babylon 5*. The show features lots of space battles, giant robots, impressive hardware and long launch sequences inspired by Thornton's love of *Thunderbirds*.

Third Rock from the Sun (formerly *Life As We Know It*), featuring John Lithgow as a wandering alien and cancelled by ABC, has now been bought by NBC as a mid-season replacement. Let's face it, though – both of the titles are a bit crap.

Mortal Fear is a mini-series based on a novel written by medical drama expert Robin Cook, about a doctor who discovers the key to immortality. Other based-on-the-book shows include:

- *The Langoliers*, taken from a Stephen King story (with another King mini-series, possibly based on *Insomnia*, currently in pre-production – will they never stop? Hopefully before they get to do *Rose Madder...*).
- Dean R Koontz's *Dark Rivers of the Heart*.

ALMOST THERE...

THE BRIGHT, BRIEF LIFE OF VR.5

LAST YEAR'S BUMPER CROP OF NEW AMERICAN SF SHOWS INCLUDED 20TH CENTURY FOX'S CYBERPUNK DRAMA VR.5, WHICH BLENDED INFLUENCES AS DIVERSE AS JOE 90 – WITH ITS SECRET MISSIONS UNDERTAKEN USING MIND-ALTERING HARDWARE – AND THE MOVIES DREAMSCAPE AND BRAINSTORM, TO CREATE WHAT COULD PERHAPS HAVE BECOME THE NEXT X-FILES. CANCELLED BEFORE ITS TIME, UK VIEWERS ARE TO GET THEIR FIRST CHANCE TO SEE WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN IN OCTOBER, WRITES **JIM SWALLOW...**

It's taken a while for cyberpunk to make its way to television, with most of the medium's flirtations with the sub-genre being brief and forgettable affairs. Now, however, with feature films like *Hackers*, *Johnny Mnemonic* and *Virtuosity* on the rise, cyberpunk/virtual reality TV shows are a virtual inevitability. The most recent attempt was *VR.5*, created by, among others, executive producer Thania St John of *Lois & Clark* fame.

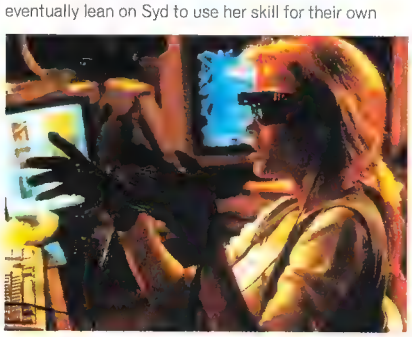
"Virtual Reality Is Real," read the show's adline, but sadly *VR.5*'s ratings weren't real enough to keep it from a surprise cancellation halfway through the first season. It's a shame too, because *VR.5* showed some promise – even if its acid-trip of a pilot episode was to leave critical and fan opinion split down the middle.

The set-up went like this: Sydney Bloom (Lori Singer) is a bright young hacker toying with hi-tech virtual reality hardware while not working for her employer, a phone company. When Syd accidentally plugs herself and her obnoxious neighbour (a great cameo role for magician Penn Jillette) into a hyper-real virtual world, she discovers she has the ability to enter and affect the subconscious minds of other people, provided they're linked to her along a phone line. Unwittingly, Syd has penetrated VR.5, a virtual reality which engages all five senses, and which is rendered on-screen by garish colours to heighten its unreality.

Singer plays Bloom as a combo of the withdrawn computer nerd stereotype and the sensitive cello player we remember from *Fame*, and first uses her new talent to speak to her mother (Louise Fletcher), who sits vacantly in a waking coma. We also see Syd's tortured childhood memories in the form of a teaser flashback which shows the death of her twin sister Samantha and her dad (David McCallum). Mum's coma, and dad and Sam's deaths, are all connected to a shadowy power called The Committee, who eventually lean on Syd to use her skill for their own purposes. Initially, her contact is VR guru Professor Morgan, but he's killed in the third episode and replaced by Anthony Head (the smoothie from the Gold Blend ads!) – a more calculating "control," who sees Syd as an asset to be exploited.

Lori Singer (centre) is – like Sandra Bullock in *The Net* – one of those beautiful girl-nerds you never actually meet.

Killing off a major character so early in the show's run was a brave move – and, presumably, an attempt to prove to viewers that *VR.5* was willing to push back boundaries. Unfortunately, less effort was made to develop the other characters – and the series wavered before finding its feet. In later episodes, however, things picked up, with Syd running missions to capture an errant assassin, a runaway teenage prodigy, and other sanctioned targets. Behind every surface plot, however, lay a story thread linked to Syd's father and his work with the Committee, which gradually opened up to reveal a complex web of intrigue that built to a cliffhanger ending, hinting that Syd's dad and sister might not be dead after all...



Somehow VR glasses don't have the appeal of a cello...

Of course, now we'll probably never know. Fox's unexpected termination of the show came as a shock to its growing core of fans, and in many ways the network's reaction was odd, given the eventual performance of other slow starters like *The X-Files*.

Indeed, some say that *VR.5* took a dive, like its Fox running mate *Sliders*, simply to make space for *Space: Above and Beyond* and *Strange Luck*. *Sliders*, too, was cancelled, of course, but later resurrected, although it's unlikely *VR.5* will be so lucky. Still, anything's possible. After all, the show is set to air on Sky in October (and on the BBC later), and success here has saved US series before...

- Clive Barker's *Weaveworld* (with effects from long time Barker collaborator Bob Keene).
- Kurt Vonnegut's *Harrison Bergeron* (based on the short story *Welcome to the Monkey House*).
- Nevil Shute's *On the Beach*, to be remade once again.
- Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, with Ted Danson in the lead and creatures supplied by The Henson Creature Shop. Currently being shot in the UK, this latest version will apparently recreate all the countries featured in the novel (Brobdigan, the floating island Laputa and Luggnagg) and not just Lilliput.
- Jules Verne's *Mysterious Island*.

Legend – the *Wild, Wild West* meets *Remington Steele* series from *DS9/Voyager* creator Michael Piller – has been axed after only a few episodes, but Piller is attempting to rally fans to help resurrect the show. Studio execs have still to decide on the fate of the series, which features Richard Dean Anderson (*MacGyver*) and John DeLancie (Q in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*) as the leads. Visually impressive, the show is a bit slow-going, and even moving it to to a slot straight after *Voyager* didn't help much.

Mourir D'Amour crosses *Dead Again* with *Highlander* (allegedly), in a tale of two star-crossed lovers who keep falling in love, dying, and getting reincarnated.

Star Command, the new German-made Paramount show from Stephen J Cannell (*The A-Team*) and Jim Johnston (*Babylon 5*) follows six young space cadets as they strive to defend the Earth. The show seems set to go head-to-head with the similar-in-concept *Space: Above and Beyond*, although *Star Command* is apparently striving to be more "realistic." A US version of *Star Cops*, perhaps?

Alien Nation returns for two more TV movies after *Dark Horizon*, with *Body and Soul* and *The Change* ordered by Fox for the new year.

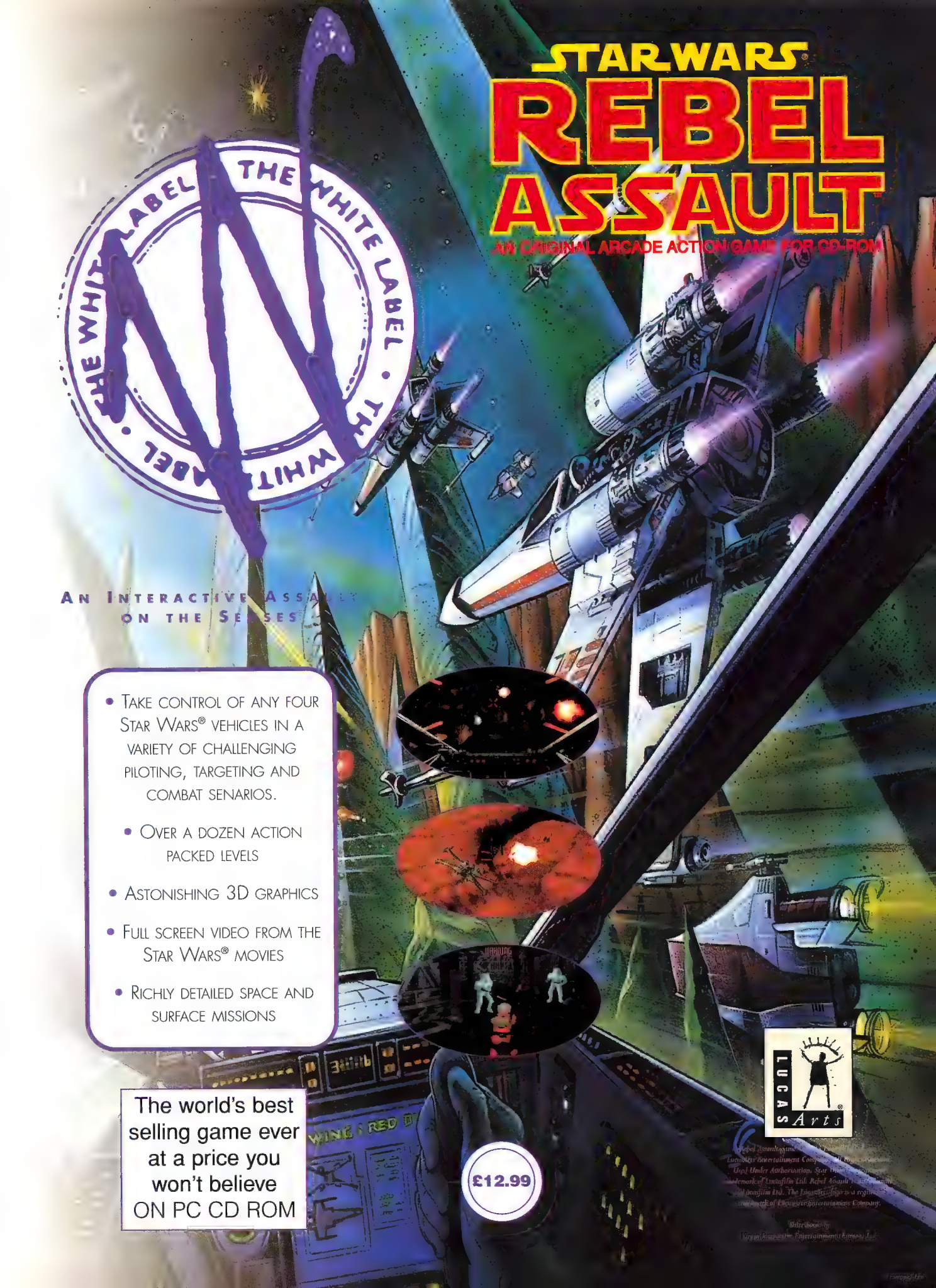
In pre-production are TV appearances for Marvel comic heroes *She-Hulk*, *The Punisher*, *Nick Fury*, *Generation X* and *The Black Widow*, as well as Dark Horse's less well-known *Enemy*.

Due to air on the Showtime cable network, *Roger Corman Presents...* is an anthology show with SF overtones from the Z-movie maestro, churner-out of cheapies since the '50s. He's talked about doing TV before, but now he's actually gone and done it. Hurrah!

An animated version of the '70s Glen Larson show *Battlestar Galactica* is in discussion, as is – gulp! – a live action revival, retitled simply *Battlestar*.

And for the latest news on the Universal/BBC *Doctor Who* TV movie, check out page four.

And that's all folks! Remember, though – this has just been a rundown of the upcoming US-originated offerings. Though they're thin on the ground – and many will probably never get finished – there are some new British SF shows on the way. Check out next issue for details!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Ignorant writers, Orwell, Joyce & aliens...

"THE LONE REVIEWER"

Dear SFX,
The scene opens in Arkham Asylum. The lone reviewer sits in the corner, strapped into his jacket for safety, and rocking backwards and forwards.

"*Congo* is better than *Dredd!*" he screams.

"*Congo* is better than *Dredd*... And *Batman Returns* is the worst Batman film!"

There is only silence.

Russ Law
Mexborough

Are you questioning our judgement?

"NOEL'S HOUSE PARTY"

Dear SFX,
I notice what could potentially become a tendency to pigeon-hole yourself into a single genre (re your *Glen or Glenda* review, SFX2). There is nothing wrong at all with writing about and covering something that isn't purely SF. We are not all lame-brainers who sit at home re-watching *Doctor Who* vids endlessly, you know, unprepared to have some other genre in our life. I'm not at all suggesting that you should be giving us two-page appraisals of *Noel's House Party*, but if there's something out there that's good, and plainly of interest, then don't be afraid to confront us with it.

Myself, I feel that horror should be represented more in SFX, as this is still largely only covered by "underground" magazines that do not sit proudly on the WH Smith stand like yourselves. I suspect that many of your readers who enjoy SF also follow the more popular works in horror.

Yours,

Richard Rowe
mike_g@mailhost.lds.co.uk

"GOOD OLD BILL"

Dear SFX,
Congrats are due to Karen Levell, who made me go and buy *The Ashes of Eden* after reading her review. Only good old Bill could have pulled it off. Not even that bald guy could have done it as well.

Victor Jarque
Edinburgh

The missing link – and, of course, one of the main stars of *Congo*. We still reckon *Dredd* is the better film. Just.

Congratulations are certainly in order to Judith and Garfield Reeves-Stevens for writing a fine Star Trek *novel. We at SFX, however, wonder whether William Shatner has ever actually seen the book himself...*

"BEEN HERE, SEEN THIS BEFORE"

T-SHIRT WINNER!

Hi guys,
Thanks very much for the *Babylon 5* coverage in issue three. I really do agree with the comment that it could be "the last best hope" for TV SF at the moment. I only started watching the show because the effects were generated on my favourite computer (the Amiga), but got hooked very quickly. It just keeps getting better and better.

I recently caught some of the new *Trek* spin-off *Voyager* and I must say I think it has some promise. After the blandness of *DS9* and the "plush carpeted" safety of *TNG*, it's nice to see characters who look and act like real people again (Mr Paris is a good example). However, Captain Wooden (Janeway) is another matter...

I think what makes *B5* shine over *TNG* is that it feels more "real." I've been watching *Trek* since I was five years old and the current run of *TNG* on BBC 2 has a feeling of "been here, seen this before." The characters and plot lines are so horribly predictable, and at the end everyone's okay and safe in the knowledge that they did "The Right Thing."

So *B5* has a dark side, does it? Excellent! That gives us an excuse to run this highly literal "lighting up the gloom" pic.

B5, on the other hand, deals with a grittier world, where murders happen, anti-alien racism occurs, and people lust after power and wealth. There is a darker side to *B5*...

See ya,

Paul Barker
spooky@pbarker.demon.co.uk

"JUST A BIT OF FUN"

Dear SFX,
I'm a big fan of Harry Harrison, and I know he isn't too fond of the *Bill, The Galactic Hero* sequels. He doesn't like them because, as he says, he was "conned" into writing them, and because his various co-authors had different ideas about the direction the stories were going in. But "juvenile"? No, I can't have that.

Most of these books are actually pretty good. The first sequel ...*On the Planet of Robot Slaves* Harrison wrote alone, and he admits that he quites like it. In fact, the only real stinker in the series was the second sequel, the dire ...*On the Planet of Bottled Brains*, co-authored by Robert Sheckley. For crying out loud, these books are supposed to be fun, not brilliant works of literature. I'd even say that most of them make preferable reading to *Star Smashers of the Galaxy Rangers*, which, for some reason, you chose to recommend.

Gavin Wilson
Didcot

In all fairness to Harry, "juvenile" was being used here in its publishing sense, meaning a

book aimed at young people, and not as a pejorative comment.

"IGNORANT AND CONTRIVED"

Dear chaps,

Your mag is good fun but spoilt by the attitude that seems to be coming from the pages (i.e. that the editorial team are just a bunch of kids who happen to have landed a job in SF journalism even though they haven't a clue).

An example is on page 95 of issue three. The review of Phil O'Brien's *Memories of the Irish Israeli War* starts with the bizarre "Starting out like 1984 as written by James Joyce..." Need I continue?

If the editorial is obviously ignorant and contrived then, no more readers! I've picked out one obvious "howler," but there are plenty more to choose from. Could try harder...

Cheers,

Keith Anderson
100614.3277@compuserve.com

After a millisecond of head-scratching, we worked this one out... Presumably, you reckon we think James Joyce wrote 1984. *But we read the O'Brien review as, "This book is what 1984 would have been like if James Joyce had written it." Of* course *we know the difference between Joyce and Orwell. It's straight to Room 101 for you, matey!*

"SEMI-AFFECTIONATE, SEMI-PISSTAKE"

Dear sirs,

In issue three, Mike Belbin of London set out his "rules" for the usage of SF/Sci-Fi/Science Fiction, and, although they're interesting, I disagree with his descriptions. In my experience, they're all used, by different sorts of people, as blanket terms to describe the whole genre.

Sci-fi is generally used by THE MEEJA, mums, Americans, anoraks, fans of Japanese child pornography (sorry: manga) and people who are far too interested in *Doctor Who* and *Star Trek*. Everybody else uses science fiction or SF. These two are usually interchangeable. I've also found that while people say "science fiction" they write SF.

One other term which Mr Belbin didn't mention is "skiffy," as used by Iain (M) Banks. I like this one, because it seems to be semi-affectionate, semi-pisstake. No bad thing, that.

One thing I disagree with you about is *Babylon 5*. Good, is it? Then why haven't they shot the scriptwriters and got a cast who can act? I watched most of the first series and it was embarrassingly lousy. Jerry Doyle's character is so clichéd it's untrue, and Bruce Boxleitner couldn't act his way out of a wet paper bag. Come on, admit it, it's awful.

Finally, am I the only person in the world to think that *The Outer Limits* is shite? Not just shite, mind you, but derivative shite. I have yet to see an episode where the idea wasn't ripped off from an old SF story. They even nicked one of Asimov's book titles for an episode. About the best one was "Sand Kings," but even that went for the good ol' "obsessed scientist with scared wifey and inquisitive little kid" cast of characters. Well, there goes another nail in the coffin for SF on TV.

Yours faithfully,

PA Bellamy
Sheffield

While agreeing that much of the new The Outer Limits *series is awful, we should point out that many of the episodes are deliberately adapted from "old SF stories." For example, the "I, Robot" episode to which you refer is based on the Adam Link stories by Otto Binder, which first appeared in* Amazing *in 1939. Asimov's identically titled anthology did not appear until 1950, and* The Encyclopaedia of SF *describes Binder's work as "an important predecessor" to Asimov's. The recent* OL *adaptation of "I, Robot" was a remake of an original* OL *episode from 1965, starring Leonard Nimoy!*

SFXCELLENT! Best Bit of Science Fiction Ever

This month, it's the turn of Fiona Chalmers from Elgin to go all gooey, this time over Cameron's thrilling sequel to Ridley Scott's *Alien*. Don't forget: If you want to wibble on about your favourite bit of SF – be it a TV show, film or whatever – write to us at: The Best Bit Of Science Fiction Ever, SFX, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW. An SFX T-shirt goes to any we use.

"It's arguable that *Aliens* is the greatest sci-fi/horror film of all time, with Sigourney Weaver back and kicking ass in her second outing as Ellen Ripley. Several scenes stand out – the frighteningly real 'dream' sequence after Ripley is rescued; the gung-ho marines being picked off one by one in the alien lair; Ripley and Newt being attacked when they're stuck in Medlab with the face-huggers; and the startling final attack by the alien queen on the mother ship. Then there are the wonderful characters: Michael Biehn's heroic Corporal Hicks, Bishop (Lance Henrikson), the "artificial person" who Ripley initially despises, but then grows to respect, Jenette Goldstein as the macho Private Vasquez, and the cowardly Private Hudson (Bill Paxton). For a film like this, the aliens appear remarkably early on too, and there's some classy dialogue to enjoy – 'Hey, Vasquez! Have you ever been mistaken for a man?' 'No, Hudson. Have you?' Sigourney Weaver earned a well-deserved Oscar nomination for Cameron's epic, which is my choice for the Best Bit Of Science Fiction Ever."

THE SFX WHAT DO YOU... BOX...

This month, We Also Heard From the following...

Ceri Sian Wiltshire, Solihull; ***Roland Robinson***, Netherlands ("You should be ashamed of yourself giving *Stargate* a D- in SFX1."); ***P Lee***, Bournemouth; ***Fiona Chalmers***, Elgin; ***Paul Maloney***, Mansfield; ***John Porter***, Leicester; ***Jason Mitchell***, Godalming; ***Alan Stephen***, Aberdeen ("Everything bad is sci-fi *[Lost In Space, Automan*, Perry Rhodan novels], everything good is SF *[B5*, Gregory Benford novels!]"); ***Tracey Barron***, Taunton ("I have read the magazine from cover to cover, but have yet to discover what half an unwell cephalopod is."); ***Tim Mewton***, Wiltshire; ***Andrew Black, Fabien Wernly, Gavin Wilson, Tim Walker***, in cyberspace...

And the following people who disagreed with us on the quality of *Batman Forever*: ***Tom Bramhall***, Blackpool ("Schumacher has ruined the legend of Batman."); ***Alex Mileman***, Heathfield ("I don't understand how you can heap praise on what is at best an average film."); ***Mark Edwards***, London ("has to be *the* disappointment of the year so far.'); ***Andrew Oakley***, Cheltenham (*"Judge Dredd* was everything *Batman Forever* was not. Stallone was ideal as Dredd."); ***Chris Hodgson***, e-mail (*"Judge Dredd* makes a real effort. *Batman Forever* is a real effort."); ***Ian Whitfield***, Hinckley ("Every kind of excitement was there, yet I was bored."); ***Keith Penfold***, Folkestone ("The second film is still the best in the entire series.")

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Future

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This month the SFX team loved: *Preacher*, the return of *The X-Files*, Worldcon, and Blur's *The Great Escape*.

20TH CENTURY FOX PRESENTS

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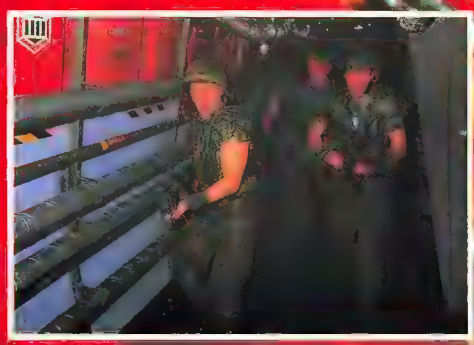

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David Langford

Badgered To Death

When I was much younger, I used to buy practically *any* paperback labelled Science Fiction going – even the sinister yellow-spined Badger Books from the infamous John Spencer & Co Ltd... Books which, despite being terrible, are now sought after the world over by SF connoisseurs. Even the titles were distinctive: *Zero Minus X, Reactor XK9, Formula 29X, Force 97X, Uranium 235, Barrier 346, Galaxy 666*...

There were well over 170 of these volumes, by a variety of authors sharing a strangely similar style – RL Fanthorpe, Erle Barton, Lee Barton, Thornton Bell, Leo Brett, Lionel Roberts, Neil Thanet, Pel Torro, Karl Zeigfreid... And apparently they admired each others' work. Often, during staggering SF events, for example, one of Torro's heroes would think: "This was like some story by the great science fiction writers of the 20th century, HG Wells, Karl Zeigfreid or RL Fanthorpe!"

Years later the secret emerged: Virtually the whole output of Badger Books was written by one man – Robert Lionel Fanthorpe – in his spare time. Staggering home from work as a truck driver or schoolteacher, he would immediately start dictating into a tape recorder – and fast, because the publishers' generous offer of £22.50 for a 45,000-word novel came with an attached two-day deadline. Once there was an emergency, and the deadline was eight hours. The family would have to put a blanket over him so his muttering didn't disturb their TV viewing...

Since there was no time for second drafts, the output was always a little uneven. Plots were brazenly stolen from Homer, Chaucer, Shakespeare and others not in a position to complain. Whenever ideas stopped flowing, relentless padding was inserted. For example, in *Neuron World* it turns out that hyperspace is a bit, you know, darkish:

"Never, not even in the deepest natural darkness that she had ever experienced, had she encountered an absence of light as total as this. It was unutterably dark, this was the Stygian darkness of which poets wrote. This was the pit of Acheron of which the creators of classic prose made mention. This was a kind of darkness that made thick, black velvet seem like chiffon by contrast. This was the kind of darkness that turned pitch into translucent polythene, when the two were placed side by side. This was the kind of darkness that made the wings of the raven resemble the pinions of the dove..."

It carries on being dark for several more paragraphs, then modulates into passages of vividly described greyness, followed by a prolonged riot of colour. Similarly, in *Galaxy 666*, there's a climactic speech by a character who evidently has *Roget's Thesaurus* to hand:

"There's something strangely capricious about this place. Just as our universe is a motivated universe, this one is motiveless. The real universe, the universe to which we belong, has purpose... This is a temperamental galaxy, an hysterical galaxy, a mad galaxy. This is an insane, freakish, wanton, erratic, inconsistent galaxy; it's a completely unreasonable galaxy. It's undisciplined, refractory, uncertain and unpredictable. It's a volatile galaxy, a mercurial..."

Sometimes such golden prose filled up the book too fast, and frantic typists would cry: "Lionel, you've only got 750 words for your hero to defeat an attacking alien spacefleet ten million strong!" This called for stern measures. "Right, lads," the hero would resourcefully say, turning to a hitherto unmentioned cupboard labelled FORBIDDEN WEAPON – NEVER TO BE USED. "We'll have to use the Flazgaz Heat Ray!" "Not the Flazgaz Heat Ray?!" Zzzzzaaappp! Exit invincible alien fleet. THE END.

I never thought that one day I'd meet the perpetrator of all this deeply memorable prose, but it duly came about. Nowadays, the *Reverend* Lionel Fanthorpe makes regular, ebullient appearances at SF conventions. And then Wrigley-Cross Books in the USA asked me to write the introduction to *Down the Badger Hole*, which collects the funniest passages from Lionel's Badger novels, including ones I'd never read, like *Rodent Mutation:*

"'Police!' screamed the neighbour in terror. 'Help! We're being attacked. We're being attacked by a gigantic beaver!'"

Don't we all get days like that? And I want this line from *Beyond the Void* inscribed on my tombstone:

"He was a mental grasshopper, an intellectual kangaroo, a mind wallaby."

Must hop off now...

Unlike our David Langford, who got two this year, RL Fanthorpe never won a Hugo award.

Rob Scott

"This is an hysterical galaxy, a mad galaxy... An insane, freakish, wanton, erratic galaxy..."

Extract from *Galaxy 666*

John Grant

Missed Deadline

Sometime early next year there was to be a column from me about John Brunner. For it I was going to stand on my soapbox: It is a sad reflection on the state of SF that second and third-rate US writers of banal skiffy adventures and hack novelizers of hack TV series are worshipped as gurus, whereas some of the most important – and most enjoyable – postwar SF novels are neglected to the point they can no longer find a publisher to keep them in print.

I shouldn't have put off writing that column. John Brunner – who I am proud to say was my friend – died on 25 August, after suffering a massive stroke. He was in Glasgow, attending the 53rd World SF Convention. I like to think he couldn't have staged his exit better. He died nearby to about 5,000 people who respected or even revered his work, and who in some cases loved him as an astonishingly generous-spirited man (although his fuse was always short). But at the same time I do dearly wish he weren't dead. Ignoring all my own personal feelings – his death leaves a gulf – I had the expectation that, any day soon, he was going to sit down and write the SF novel that would drive all the rest of us back to our caves to rethink where we could go from here.

I missed my deadline – something John never did.

So what was I going to say in this column that I never got the chance to write?

Between 1968 and 1975 John Brunner wrote four novels that redefined what SF was all about. One of them – *The Sheep Look Up* (1972) – I consider to be the finest SF novel ever written. He changed the entire agenda of SF with this and three other novels, the four of them all

Rob Scott

appearing in a magnificent creative burst: the rest were *Stand on Zanzibar* (1968), *The Jagged Orbit* (1969) and *The Shockwave Rider* (1975). *Stand on Zanzibar* won a deserved Hugo, BSFA Award and Prix Apollo, yet never made him a great deal of money – probably because, at a quick flick, it looks "difficult" rather than the compulsively page-turning thriller it really is.

But to call it just a thriller is to misrepresent it. The great point about *Stand on Zanzibar* was that it was about something. It tackled the major issue of overpopulation head-on, without compromise. It was a political novel as much as an SF novel. Even today, nearly 30 years later, it's impossible to read this book without being profoundly affected: On the one hand, it's tremendous entertainment, yet it forces you to think.

The Sheep Look Up, about pollution, did this even more so. *The Shockwave Rider*, I maintain – even though John himself always demurred – invented cyberpunk a decade before William Gibson and Bruce Sterling reached for their Fischer-Price word processors. *The Jagged Orbit*, about media intrusion, is the least of the four, yet if published today would be among the two or three most significant novels of 1995.

"I had the expectation that, any day soon, John Brunner was going to sit down and write the SF novel that would drive all the rest of us back to our caves to rethink where we could go from here ."

There are others of note in the Brunner canon. *The Squares of the City* (1965) was a remarkable bit of work. Hurling off the trappings of generic SF, he produced a piece of mainstream fiction that, though studiously ignored by mainstream critics (he was, after all, "merely" an SF writer) taught all of us how to write and how the boundaries of fiction, of whatever stripe, could be pushed back. *The Traveler in Black* (1971; overhauled and expanded in 1987 as *The Compleat Traveller in Black*) showed fantasy could have greater aspirations than drably imitating Tolkien. *Quicksand* (1967), demonstrated that the traditional "British" SF novel, *á là* Wyndham, could encompass themes other than cataclysm.

How did we reward John Brunner? How did we respond to this corpus of novels that lies at the very heart of SF? I would rather do without the complete works of Asimov and Heinlein than that either *The Sheep Look Up* or *Stand on Zanzibar* had never been written – yet what did SF readers do? By the time John died, every single novel mentioned on this page was out of print in this country, and – I believe – in the USA.

Imagine if the complete works of Huxley, Orwell or Wells were out of print. Such a scandal would be an indication of the myopia of the British book trade (I'm thinking of the booksellers rather than publishers) and of the stupidity of the British, and world's, reading public.

Now imagine the complete works of John Brunner being out of print... The nightmare truth is that they are. And all the same comments apply.

JOHN BRUNNER 1934-1995

MANY OF HIS BOOKS WILL TAKE SOME SEARCHING FOR, BUT IF YOU CALL YOURSELF AN SF FAN YOU OWE IT TO YOURSELF TO READ JOHN BRUNNER. TO HELP YOU CHOOSE, BRUNNER'S FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES PICK THE BEST OF HIS WORK...

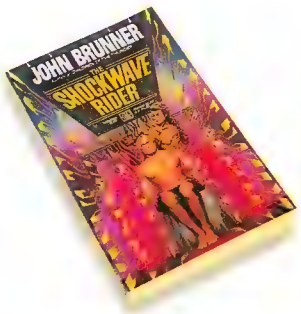
the best of John Brunner

THE SQUARES OF THE CITY

Published: **1965**
Text: **John Grant**

In a South American country suffering something like a military dictatorship, various characters slowly begin to discover – although they never quite do – the extent to which their lives are under control. John Brunner was never one, once he had asked a question, to opt for the easy answer. Here, although himself a passionate believer in freedom, he had the courage to remain ambiguous about the morality of the controllers of his fictitious state – for it cannot be denied that the cold, covert control exercised over the state's citizens is in many ways beneficial to them. To symbolize the calculatedness of the control, Brunner based his plot on a chess game (Steinitz-Tchigorin [Havana] 1892). But such a technicality need in no way interfere with our enjoyment of a marvellous, gripping, hauntingly atmospheric masterpiece of modern fiction.

THE SHOCKWAVE RIDER



Published: **1975**
Text: **David Langford**

The Shockwave Rider has long been my favourite of John Brunner's major SF blockbusters. It tackles the continuing impact of future shock in a world where the arms race has given way to the brain race. Computer nets are abolishing privacy, faceless people with high-level access codes can zap your identity and credit ratings, governments treat life-saving information as their private property, giant corporations use up human beings and throw them away, 'worm' programs infest data space... and it's jolting to remember that this was published in 1975.

Although the background seems dark, the storyline is fast, clever, unputdownable and ultimately upbeat. John Brunner hoped, and argued here, that sanity could win in the end. Alas, he died too soon to see it.

STAND ON ZANZIBAR

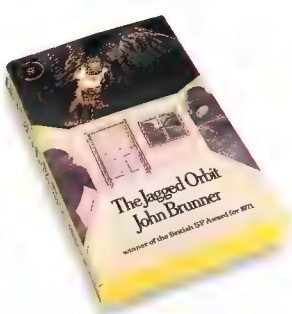
Published: **1968**
Text: **Christopher Priest**

Stand on Zanzibar was one of the most significant SF novels of the 1960s, a bravura performance from an author who, until then, had been identified with more routine adventure stories.

John Brunner took the future by the throat, and shook it until its head rattled. Spilling out came fragmented images of overpopulation, genetic engineering, industrial pollution, hippie gurus, media frenzy, drug barons, computer virtual realities – images that were genuinely shocking, genuinely fresh and new. What eco-pundits fumble with today, John Brunner gripped in virtuoso cinematic tracking shots, frenetic TV channel-switching, the fractal attention-span of the now decade.

I was fortunate enough to read the book from the author's top-copy manuscript, to be one of the first people in the world to see this brilliant novel. (Yes, the information on the final page was literally true.)

THE JAGGED ORBIT



Published: **1969**
Text: **John Clute**

It came too soon after its older brother, and has sulked in the shadow of *Stand on Zanzibar* ever since. This is too bad. *The Jagged Orbit* may be a sibling of the bigger book, and use the same tabloid techniques to access as much of the world as possible, but it's really a very different kind of tale. Unlike *Zanzibar*, it's not an anatomy of the downside of the future. It's the last of John Brunner's Brilliant Adventures, his last high-momentum, pulp tour-de-force. Arms dealers and Mafia sorts run America and the media collaborate, but a journalist and a guy with a brain sent down from the day after tomorrow blow the gaffe. Fireworks everywhere. And the future dawns like thunder.

THE SHEEP LOOK UP

Published: **1972**
Text: **Ian Watson**

Written almost quarter of a century ago, this remains the ultimate doomsday book of a world shot to shit by the rape of our environment through greed. Never indulging in overkill, this complex, tragic virtuoso masterpiece heaves up for our horrified inspection the whole iceberg of eco-catastrophe which is on a collision course with our ill-steered Titanic. *The Sheep Look Up* is a brilliantly skillful multi-track book, spliced with invented reports and obituaries and public notices, from a masterly novelist and prophet of great sanity who grips his readers irresistibly. In our world of ozone warnings and rampant allergies, droughts and dying forests, this harrowing and committed, angry novel comes ever closer to fact. Let us weep for sheep, for the sheep are ourselves.

THE COMPLEAT TRAVELLER IN BLACK

Published: **1987 (earlier version as *The Traveler in Black*, 1971)**
Text: **Brian Stableford**

The five novellas which make up *The Compleat Traveller in Black* follow the exploits of a vagabond demigod who employs a magical staff of light to the ostensible purpose of bringing order out of chaos. The chaos in question is that which would inevitably haunt the kind of world in which magic works, where oppression would have no practical limits.

The order which the staff imposes is that of scientific laws and rational boundaries, and the reason the book belongs among the classics of fantasy is that its fabulous narratives explain, in an intense, heartfelt and elegant manner, why this kind of metamorphosis is more urgently to be desired than any mere tyranny of organised religion.

BEHOLD, THE HORDES OF KLEGG!

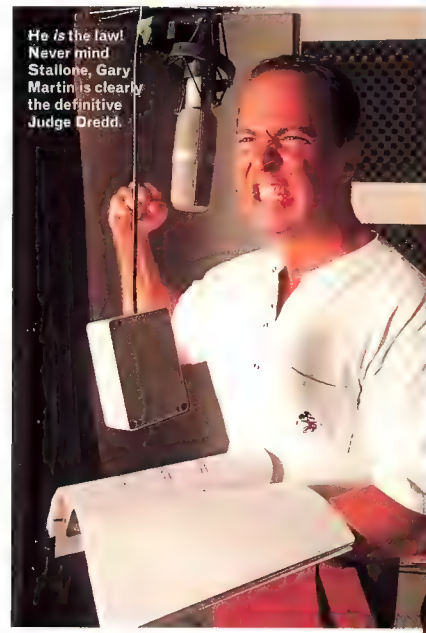
ACTUALLY, IF WE'RE BEING HONEST, THERE WON'T BE THAT MUCH BEHOLDING GOING ON. PLENTY OF KLEGGS, THOUGH. AND JUDGES. RADIO 1FM BECOMES MEGA CITY 1FM FOR THREE MINUTES EACH WEEKDAY, AS CLASSIC JUDGE DREDD TALES FOLLOW BATMAN, SUPERMAN AND OTHERS TO BECOME MINI-RADIO PLAYS. **MJ SIMPSON** VISITED THE BBC'S STUDIOS IN LONDON TO SEE HOW IT'S DONE.

The name may not be familiar to many of you, but over the past few years one man has adapted more big SF and comic properties for a mainstream audience than (by our reckoning) anyone else in the world. *Superman, Batman, Thunderbirds, Spider-Man,* and now *Judge Dredd* – Dirk Maggs has done them all. He is, of course, a radio producer, and his science fiction mini-plays have become a critically acclaimed fixture of Radio 1FM.

Currently, at 4.40pm every weekday, Radio 1 listeners are treated to three minutes of *Judge Dredd: The radio serial.* This latest adaptation began on Monday 17 July, and runs for a staggering 80 episodes – the first 40 of which retell "The Day the Law Died" (i.e. Judge Cal) storyline from the early years of *2000AD,* while the second half, kicking off on 11 September, is "The Apocalypse War," the tale that plunges Mega City One and East Meg One into all-out nuclear conflict. Cool!

Dredd is only Dirk's latest comic-book adaptation. His first venture into comics-on-the-radio was *The Trial of Superman,* a one-off play on Radio 4 in 1988, which celebrated the character's 50th anniversary. The Beeb was so pleased with the programme's reception – it even made the cover of *Radio Times* – that it commissioned Dirk to write and produce two follow-up series of 15-minute shows entitled *The Adventures of Superman.* (This was not the first radio appearance of the son of Krypton, of course. An American *Superman* radio series, starring Clayton "Bud" Collier, and, later, Michael Fitzmaurice, aired on the Mutual network in 1940 and ran for 12 years.)

When the stereo *Adventures of Superman* episodes turned out to be just as successful as the one-off, they were remixed into surround sound and rebroadcast on Radio 1, where they proved very popular indeed. So popular, in fact, that Dirk was asked to follow them up with *Batman: Knightfall,* based on the Batman-gets-his-back-broken comic "event" of a couple of years back, and then *The Amazing Spider-Man,* which even spawned a spin-off single.



He *is* the law! Never mind Stallone, Gary Martin is clearly the definitive Judge Dredd.

© Rob Scott

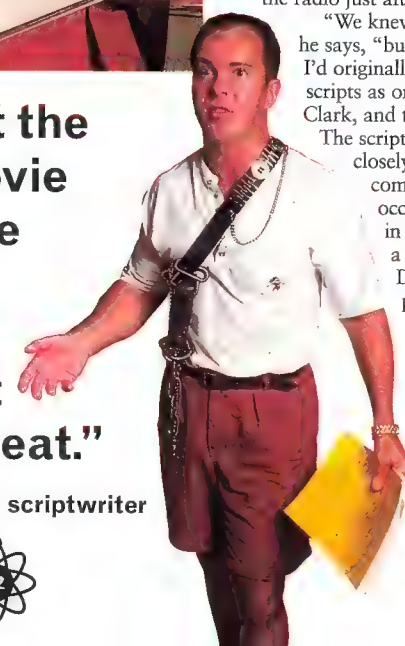
"We approached Brian May to do the theme music," remembers Dirk, who looks not unlike a rock muso himself. "It turned out he's a big fan of Spidey, and was really keen." *The Amazing Spider-Man Mastermix,* credited to "MC SPY-D & Friends," actually made the lower reaches of the charts, despite virtually no airplay – a testament to the serial's popularity. In this, the year of the *Judge Dredd* movie, *2000AD's* most popular character became the most obvious act to follow up with...

WITH 80 EPISODES STILL TO BE RECORDED, Dirk is obviously hard at work on *Judge Dredd* – though this time he's only producing, not scripting. Indeed, for this series the writing chores have fallen to a young man called Paul Powell, who came up with the idea of *Dredd* on the radio just after Dirk did *Batman.*

"We knew the film was being made," he says, "but not many details about it. I'd originally written some *Dredd* radio scripts as one-offs with a guy called Phil Clark, and they're what got me the job." The scripts used in the show stick as closely as possible to the original comic strip dialogue, although occasional alterations are made in the recording process. When a mutant alien dog swallows Dredd's gun-hand – with predictably explosive results – for example, various gags about stomach-ache and heart-burn are tossed around the recording studio until a suitable line is found. The film-makers behind the *Dredd* movie might be surprised to see how closely you can stick to

"I thought the *Dredd* movie could have been a bit more ironic, but it looks great."

Paul Powell, scriptwriter



BBC RADIO 1
I'M WALTER
TRY ME

the comics and make it work dramatically, albeit in a completely different medium...

As with the previous comic-based productions, copyright clearance to broadcast the series obviously had to be obtained, but this time things were slightly more complicated – Dirk not only had to approach Fleetway, who publish *2000AD* and various *Dredd* spin-offs, but the film's producers too. This caused its fair share of problems – in the end the final okay from Hollywood came through only three days before the first episode went out!

"Interestingly," comments Dirk, as we grab a rare break from the day's recording to bask in the blazing sun outside the studio, "we were allowed to do *Judge Dredd* because it ties in with the film, but when we did *Batman* we were only allowed to do it because there *wasn't* a film being released."

"I actually thought the *Dredd* movie was okay," chimes in Paul. "It could have done with being more ironic, but it looks great. I was talking to Carlos Ezquerra the other day, and he likes it." Presumably, Carlos was thinking about the sometimes remarkable visuals when he said that. After all, as far the storyline's concerned, the radio serials knock it for six...

"Interestingly, we were allowed to do *Judge Dredd* because it ties in with the film, but when we did *Batman* we were only allowed to do it because there *wasn't* a film being released."

Dirk Maggs, radio producer

WE'RE AT THE SOUNDHOUSE, A SMALL independent recording studio on a trading estate in Shepherd's Bush, to commit to tape another batch of *Judge Dredd* episodes. Although each individual playlet runs a scant three minutes, they're recorded in batches of ten. At least, that's the idea. The thing is, episodes 11-20 over-ran, so the last two need to be finished off before we move on to the third half-hour. The situation is somewhat complicated because Gary Martin, who plays Dredd, can only make it in the morning. At 1pm, just as the other actors are arriving, he has to rush across town to record the voice of Pie-Face for a forthcoming *Dennis the Menace* cartoon series.

Gary is quite the old hand at doing funny voices. Like Dirk, he's worked with Gerry Anderson over the past few years, one of his most recent roles being the voice of the robot Slo-Mo in *Space Precinct,* which comes to BBC screens this Autumn. In fact, Gary was one of the few hold-overs from the original 1988 *Space Police* pilot *(See the Gerry Anderson interview in SFX2 – Ed),* for which he voiced the punningly named bad guy "V Lann." *Space Police* has never been broadcast, and neither has a cartoon called *GFI,* which Gerry made a few years back, and for which Gary supplied all the main voices. ("I was asked to write the origin story for *GFI,*" confides Dirk. "I tried to explain the origins of nine or ten characters as a flashback in two 12-minute segments, and failed dismally...") When *Thunderbirds* and *Captain Scarlet* were repeated on BBC 2, Gary went down a few octaves to recreate the voices of the Hood and the Mysterons for trailers.

That's by no means his entire repertoire, though. With other credits, ranging from Mr Rock Chewer in *The Neverending Story 3* to Audrey 2 in the West End run of *Little Shop of Horrors* – and from Zordrak, Lord of Nightmares in *The Dreamstone* to Squidgy Bog(!) in *Wizbit* – Gary is clearly a jack of all voices. His hero, unsurprisingly, is Mel Blanc.

"I try to create new voices by blending two or more voices together," he explains, "so for Slo-Mo I gave him a slight New York accent, but combined that with a really hesitant voice. At first he sounded a bit too much like Woody Allen, but I developed it from there. With *Judge Dredd,* I created the voice by keeping my jaw clenched. In the comics, he always seems to be grimacing, like Clint Eastwood, so if you keep your face like this," – he sticks his chin out, Dredd-style – "your voice comes out like *this.*" And so it does.

GARY'S LINES ARE RECORDED ON QUARTER-INCH tape under the watchful eyes of Dirk and the series' engineer, Paul Deeley. In the afternoon, the rest of the cast arrive. Like Gary, these four have all worked with Dirk before: William Dufris (Judge Cal) was Spider-Man; William Roberts (Judge Griffin) was J Jonah Jameson and Commissioner Gordon; Lorelei King (Judge Hershey) was Sue Storm and Lois Lane; and Michael Roberts (Walter the Wobot) was Doctor Doom and The Ventriloquist. Radio fans may also remember Michael as Groucho in BBC's superb, award-winning recreations of the Marx Brothers' "lost" radio series *Flywheel, Shyster and Flywheel,* also produced by Dirk. He constantly slips into Groucho's voice, and other impressions fly around the building, occasionally making it into the show. Judge Schmaltz, for example, sounds uncannily like Vincent Price...

Dirk's previous radio series have been able to draw on such big names as Jon Pertwee, Burt Kwouk, Anita Dobson – and even Michael Gough as Alfred the butler! – although there's nobody that well known in *Dredd.* In fact, the cast is smaller than normal too. "I'm used to having about 14 people," he says sadly, "but on this series I've only got these five. They're all great, though."

Of course, there are more than five roles in the series – a lot more – so each of the actors has to double up, at the very least. Often, for example, it's not decided until moments before recording who's actually going to play which part. "People naturally assume that there's some sort of rehearsal," says Michael, "but we just go straight in!"

Unfortunately, recording lines separately and then mixing them in from different tapes is a time-consuming business, and so only used when strictly necessary. Instead, what normally happens when one actor is playing two parts in the same scene is that he (or she) has to talk to him/herself...

"I've actually done conversations between three characters, where I was playing all of them," laughs Dufris, who clearly relishes the over-acting required to convey Cal's insanity. In today's episode, for instance, the character is discussing his loopy plans with his slightly saner sidekick Quincy – also played by Dufris – and the actor is swapping characters in a superlative display of controlled schizophrenia. But if only it was that easy...

The problem, you see, is this: *Judge Dredd* is being recorded in surround sound, which provides, if the correct speaker system is used, a convincingly three-dimensional sound-image. The thing is, Cal and Quincy's voices *cannot* come from the same point in space. The upshot is that William – or whoever is playing the two characters in one scene – has to not only switch voices, but actually jump from one side of the microphone to the other at the same time...

But wait – it gets worse. Although many of the sound effects are supplied off CD or DAT ("grams," in old radio-speak), some are actually done in-studio ("spot" or "foley"), including the jangling of Cal's robe of office. This is actually a waistcoat covered in metal discs, which has been dredged up from a BBC costume store – and it's moulting badly. I wouldn't be surprised if it doesn't date back to some ancient *Doctor Who* adventure...

Unbelievably, there's yet another little snag to cope with too. Although William can wear the garment and rattle it himself when he's just being Cal, he can't wear it as Quincy, so for his schizoid scenes, the garment has to be held up behind him by Dirk. When William leaps across the studio to become Quincy, Dirk holds the waistcoat in place, rattling it slightly to give the impression that Cal is still standing there!

"Foley sound effects are *very* important," says Dirk. "Every time somebody says a word, we try to have a noise to represent an action. So there's something happening all the time. Occasionally, though, its nice to have dead atmosphere, by contrast."

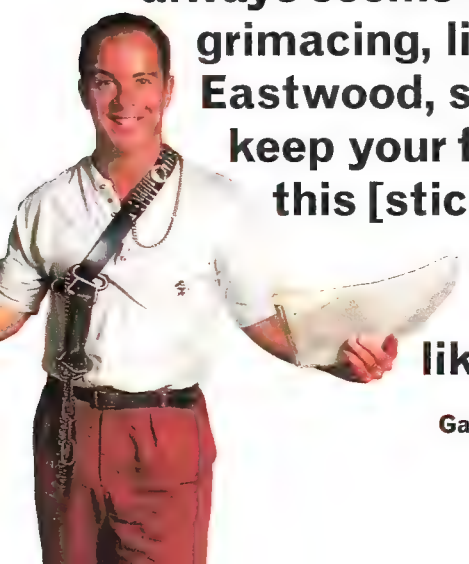
Background effects and specific sound effects are extracted from a bank of CDs, culled from a variety of effects libraries, including both the BBC and Lucasfilm. Some, however, have been specially sampled, such as the various lawgiver noises. When Gary as Dredd shouts "Incendiary!", effects-meister Wilf Acosta taps his keyboard and a little electronic voice responds with "Incendiary", followed by a huge whooshing

Dirk Maggs (in the sleeveless T-shirt) is the man behind all the BBC's successful "comics-on-the-radio" ventures, but he acknowledges that he has a good technical team behind him.

Dredd! Slo-Mo! Pie-Face from *The Beano*! Erm... Squidgy Bog from *Wizbit*! This is the face behind a thousand voices – Gary Martin.

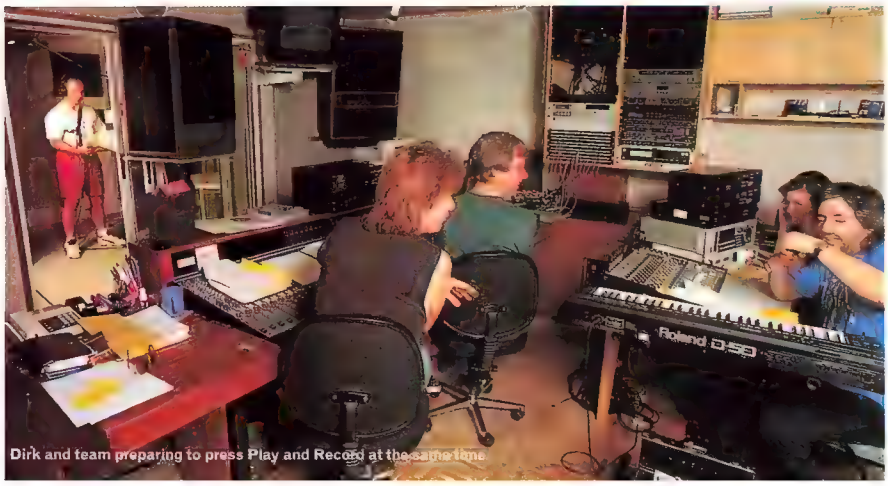
"With Judge Dredd, I created the voice by keeping my jaw clenched. In the comics, he always seems to be grimacing, like Clint Eastwood, so if you keep your face like this [sticks chin out], your voice comes out like *this*..."

Gary Martin, Judge Dredd



Scriptwriter Paul Powell and a Radio 1FM PR person check the latest script.

The Dredd radio series' fx team use a reel-to-reel and a keyboard to produce better effects than Hollywood.



Dirk and team preparing to press Play and Record at the same time

noise and the sounds of wholesale Dredd-induced destruction.

Very few scenes last longer than half a dozen lines, so each scene is recorded separately, after which the actors burst from the sweltering studio into the air-conditioned luxury of the control room, to swig orange juice, and decide on the next batch of bit-part voices.

WE'VE NOW REACHED THE POINT IN "THE DAY the Law Died," where the crocodile-like alien mercenaries, the Kleggs, have been called in by the despotic Chief Judge Cal to keep the rebellious populace in order. In this scene, Judge Cal inaugurates the first Klegg judge, Judge Grampus. Suddenly...

"We need another Klegg," says Dirk. "Mike, you can come and do it."

Gulp.

And so your intrepid reporter is whisked into the studio to stand in the background and make horrible, dribbly, gargling noises. Like "hawking up a booger," Dirk?

"Yes, that's what we're after."

Perhaps happily, the limits of onomatopoeia do not enable me to print the various Klegg-ian sounds I managed to produce that afternoon, but the next scene proved even more fun. Just after the arrival of the Kleggs, a vast convoy sets out from Mega City One, preferring to face the dangers of the Cursed Earth than stay under Cal's rule...

"We need lots of people, shuffling past the microphone, moaning and wailing," decides Dirk. "Everybody in the studio!"

"Everybody" turns out to be just that – not only the regular cast, but also myself, Paul the scriptwriter, and a friend's family, who originally just popped in to see how things were going. Under Dirk's direction, we cram into the tiny, airless studio, and, after a few apposite quotes from Michael's seemingly bottomless well of Marx-ist quips, we moan, we wail, and we shuffle in a circle, hopefully giving the impression to surround-sound listeners that a stream of miserable citizens is passing by...

Recording these radio playlets is hard work, with each three-minute episode taking about half an hour to record. The upside is that it's tremendous fun, with much mid-recording amusement to be had. For example, after recording Judge Fish's death scene, Dirk decides that he wants to overdub the sound of the piscine corpse being dropped back into his tank. He dashes out to the studio's kitchen and returns with the requisite props.

"The listeners like these shows, but I don't think the powers that be understand how much work goes into them..."

Dirk Maggs, radio producer

Knobs are twiddled and faders moved to the correct position. Thousands of pounds' worth of high-tech digital recording equipment is minutely adjusted to create the optimum aural image... And in the studio, Dirk Maggs drops an apple into a plant-pot full of water.

"Splop!"

It's uncanny how much this sounds like a dead goldfish; a ripple of applause from the cast and crew attests to its verisimilitude.

Even while *Judge Dredd* is being recorded, Dirk is having talks with Radio 1 and DC Comics about future projects

"We are currently discussing three possible Batman stories," he tells me, enthusiastically. "One is *Classic Batman*, which would be some of the really legendary battles from the old comics; one is *The Dark Knight Returns*, the great Frank Miller story; and one is *Judgement On Gotham*, which, of course, is Batman versus Dredd. When we did *Batman: Knightfall*, we were recording it at the same time that the comic was being written. Sometimes we would have to alter the script because Denny O'Neil, DC's Batman editor, would ring us up and say 'The story now goes like this...'"

And did he like what you came up with?

"The response to all the various series has been very good. The Superman shows sold to American radio, and the second Superman series, *Doomsday and Beyond*, won a talking book award when it was issued on tape over there. I'd like to have a try at a radio version of *Aliens* sometime – maybe even *Superman versus Aliens*. Or *Jurassic Park*. Having a Tyrannosaurus Rex roaring in surround sound would be great! Then again, I'd love to do some Ed McBain stuff too. His "87th Precinct" books would be perfect for radio."

One other script under discussion at the moment, although it still has to be okayed for production, is *Watchmen* – the landmark Alan Moore/Dave Gibbons comic series long rumoured to be a Terry Gilliam movie project. Dirk is working on this with a chap called Chris Millar – better known as Rat Scabies, drummer with The Damned! One big problem with the *Watchmen* film has always been that the story would be just too long and expensive to shoot – with this sort of radio serial, however, both such problems are wiped away at once.

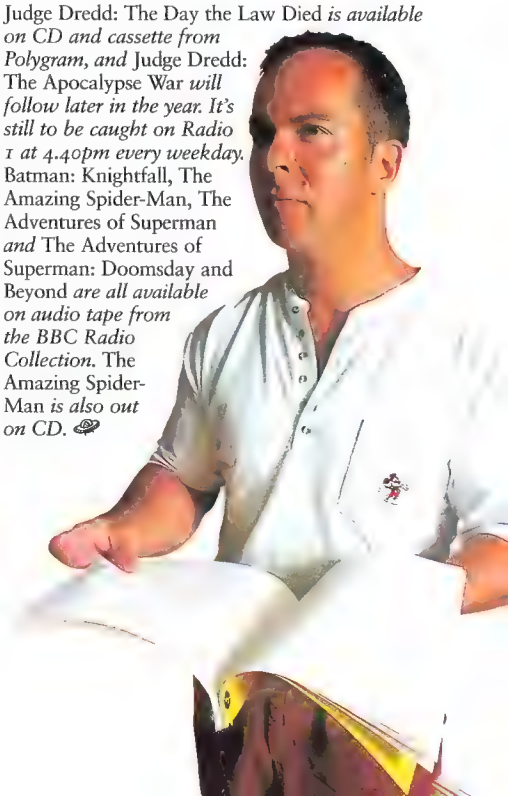
In the more immediate future, however, Dirk will be producing a Peter Pan radio play, with Toyah in the title role. A sideways move into films is also planned – Dirk will be co-writing and co-producing another Toyah project, the eagerly awaited "rock 'n' roll SF comedy" *Travelling Light*.

Although he occasionally wearies of the lack of attention paid to radio as a dramatic medium, Dirk appreciates its advantages. With *Judge Dredd*, for example, he can produce a story which wipes the floor with the Hollywood version – for a minuscule fraction of the cost.

"The listeners certainly enjoy these shows," he sighs, "but I don't think the powers that be understand how much work goes into them. Luckily, there are now a couple of guys in the Radio 1 management who know a bit about comic books, so maybe that'll change."

For the moment, though, it's back to work on *Dredd*. Once again the actors are crammed into the oven-like studio, the tape is set running, and Dirk Maggs is giving the cast somewhat unnecessary direction: "Can you give me some ad lib suffering, please?"

Judge Dredd: The Day the Law Died *is available on CD and cassette from Polygram, and* Judge Dredd: The Apocalypse War *will follow later in the year. It's still to be caught on Radio 1 at 4.40pm every weekday.* Batman: Knightfall, The Amazing Spider-Man, The Adventures of Superman *and* The Adventures of Superman: Doomsday and Beyond *are all available on audio tape from the BBC Radio Collection.* The Amazing Spider-Man *is also out on CD.*



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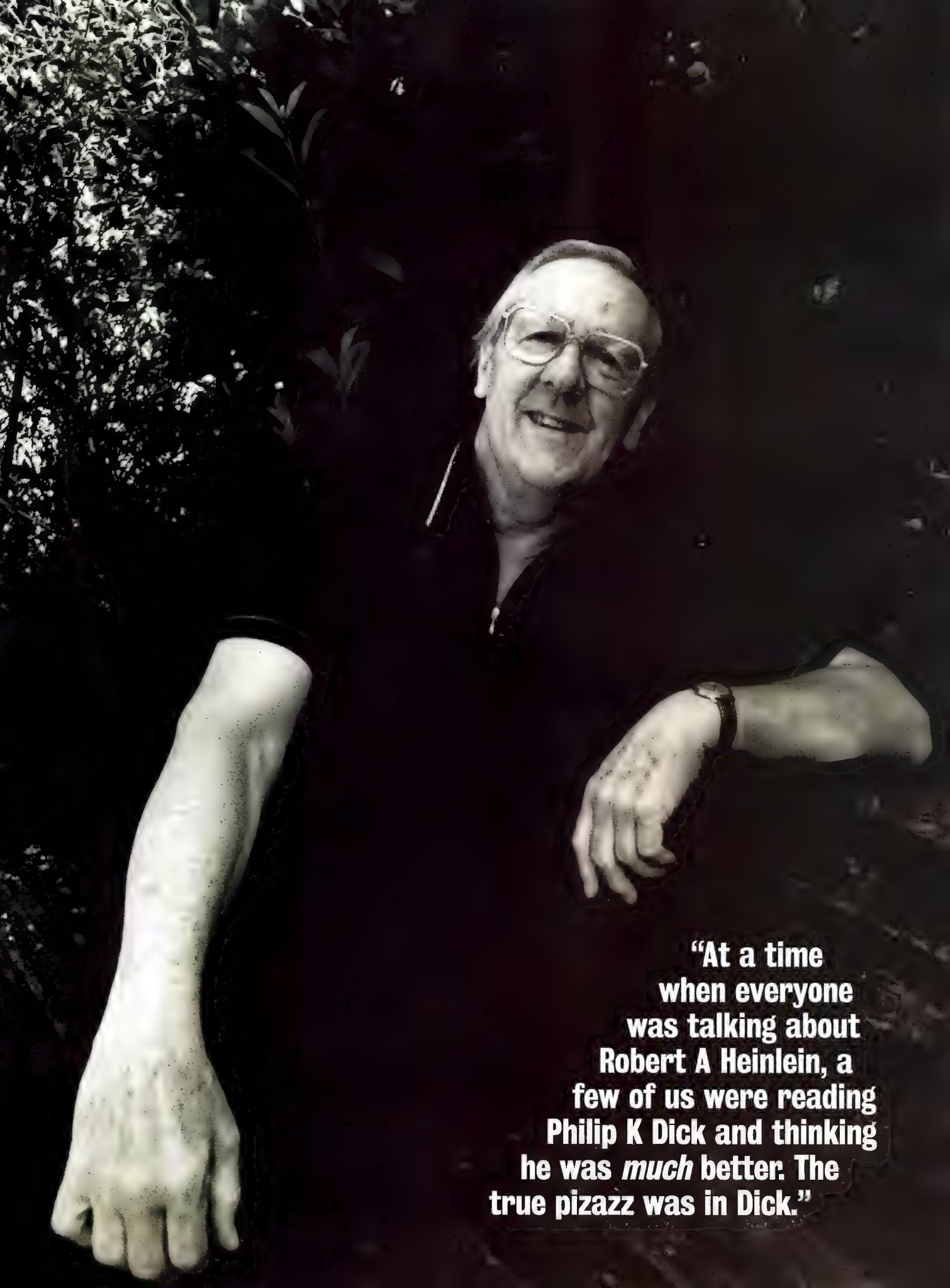


"At a time when everyone was talking about Robert A Heinlein, a few of us were reading Philip K Dick and thinking he was *much* better. The true pizazz was in Dick."

Brian Aldiss

BRIAN ALDISS IS, QUITE SIMPLY, ONE OF THE GREATEST NAMES IN BRITISH SCIENCE FICTION. HE SOLD HIS FIRST SF STORY (CRIMINAL RECORD) IN 1954, AND PUBLISHED HIS FIRST SF NOVEL (NON-STOP, AN IMAGINATIVE TREATMENT OF THE "MULTI-GENERATION STARSHIP" THEME) IN 1958. THIS YEAR, HE CELEBRATES HIS 70TH BIRTHDAY AND HIS 70TH BOOK, CRYPTICALLY ENTITLED THE SECRET OF THIS BOOK. **MJ SIMPSON** IS SUITABLY AWE-INSPIRED.

One abiding memory of my first SF convention – way back in 1984 – was buying a signed copy of Brian Aldiss' *Hothouse*. Regrettably, Brian wasn't actually at the convention himself, and a few years were to pass before I was to actually meet this friendly, knowledgeable, avuncular figure face to face. That, if I remember correctly, was at a performance of his revue, *SF Blues* – a very unusual thing for an SF author to be doing, I remember thinking. A few years further down the line, and I'm drinking tea in Brian's study, interviewing him for what we sometimes, tongue in cheek, call the "world's greatest SF magazine."

Aside from his many novels and short stories – both SF and mainstream – Brian Aldiss is also well-known as a perceptive critic and an authority on the whole SF genre. In 1964-65, he and Harry Harrison, with whom he has collaborated as co-editor on many anthologies, published two issues of *SF Horizons*, the first ever journal of SF criticism. The three anthologies which Brian edited for Penguin in 1961-64, later collected into one volume as *The Penguin Science Fiction Omnibus*, have never been out of print.

In 1973, he wrote *Billion Year Spree*, the definitive history of SF, which was later updated into *Trillion Year Spree*, co-written with David Wingrove. His controversial assertion in this book – that *Frankenstein* was the first science fiction novel – has since become accepted SF history, and inspired one of his best-known works *Frankenstein Unbound* (later filmed by Roger Corman). Other notable Aldiss novels include *Greybeard*, *Hothouse* and the *Helliconia Trilogy*. His most recent novel was *Somewhere East of Life*.

Earlier this year, Brian hit the headlines following the rediscovery of some short stories he'd written while at school, so as I sat and supped tea with him in his glorious Oxford home, I brought the subject up.

Peter J. Stone

Let's start at the beginning: Schooldays, and this recent incident in which some of your old stories were dug up in an old tin...

"The papers more or less reported it truthfully. I was enormously successful as a short story writer at school... They were all handwritten in those days, of course. And at the end of term I used to bury them in a biscuit tin down a rabbit hole in the school plantation, then dig them up again at the beginning of the next term. A lot of them were 'dirty' stories. But by no means all: There was science fiction, crime, travel, humour – mainly humour. In fact, the ones they dug up earlier this year were humorous stories... I didn't get any large financial offers, so they now repose in the Bodleian Library in Oxford."

Are they worth reading?

"No, not really. Well, I say that. I didn't find them worth reading because, thank goodness, I've travelled on a little way from there. But the boys who dug them up started reading them and were laughing at them, so I presume some of the humour has survived. You've asked me a question that no-one else has asked, although everyone's talked about this story: 'Were they worth reading?' Very sensible question! No-one else bothered to ask..."

Later on, you went into the army, and were stationed in the Far East. Were you still writing in the army?

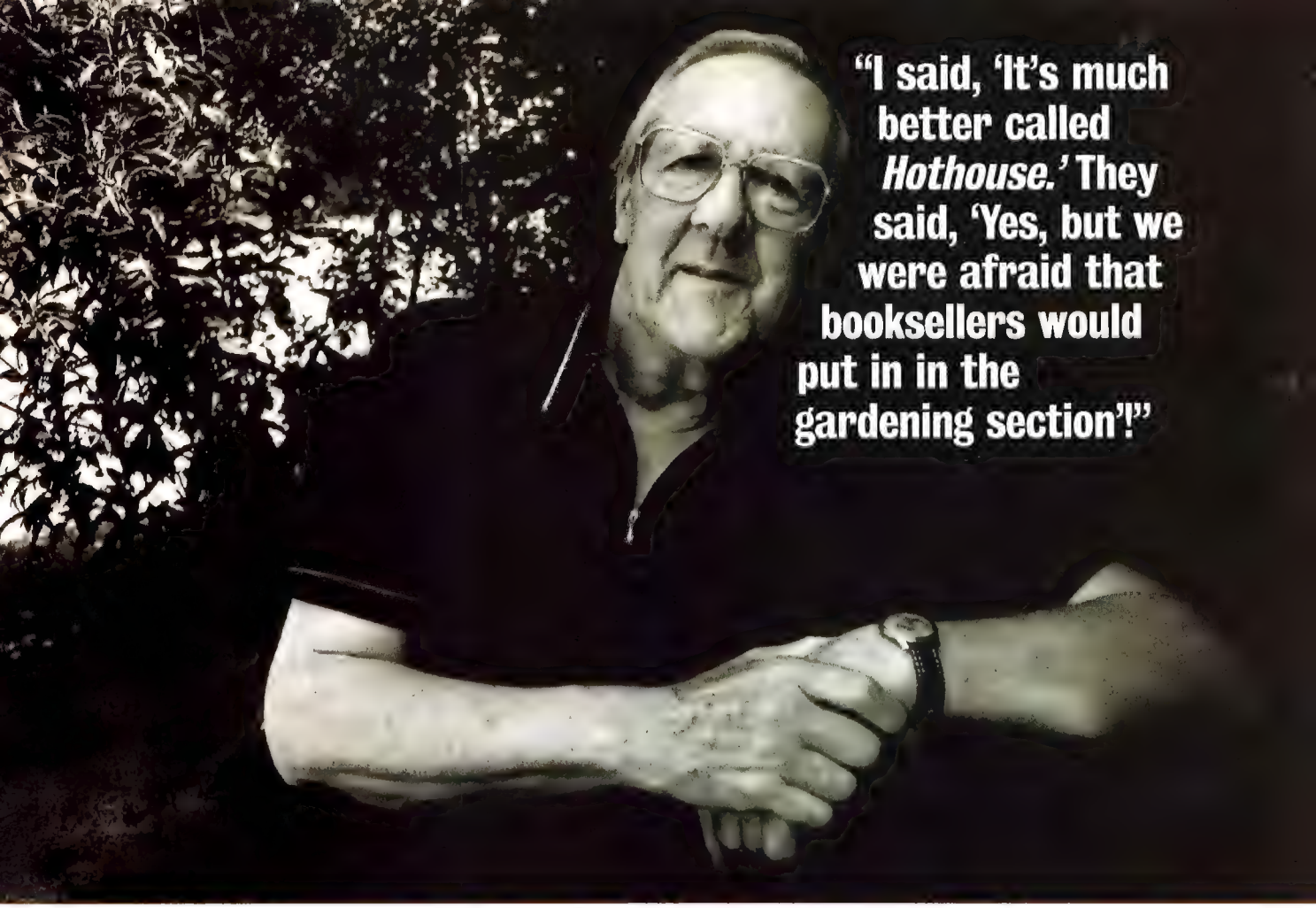
"Yes, although, of course, you don't have so much opportunity – the last time I buried any stories was when I went into the army. But, yes, I did quite a lot of writing then: Short books, all kinds of things – most of which were stolen, in the manner of the army. When I was in Sumatra I ran a section magazine, most of which I had to write myself."

What were your army experiences like? I know it deeply affected Harry Harrison. What about you?

"It can't help but affect you. And although I didn't play a particularly heroic part, I was up against the Japs in Burma. There's always a kind of division, when you get on the subject, between you and people who haven't been in a war. A good American example would be Joe Haldeman, who was very much affected by the Vietnam War. To have been in a war, you see, is a good initiation right for a young man. You *do* feel differently after it."

Then you moved to Oxford in 1948. What attracted you to Oxford?

"I wanted to be a writer, that was quite clear to me. I thought I had some sort of capacity, but I didn't want to starve in a garret. I thought it would be a good idea to work in a bookshop. I lived in Barnstaple at the time, down in Devon, so I got on a train and came up to


"I said, 'It's much better called *Hothouse.*' They said, 'Yes, but we were afraid that booksellers would put in in the gardening section'!"

Oxford and got a job. You must realise that I was quite a barbarian after four years in the Far East – I felt the only way to survive was to become a little more civilised.

"There was a time when I did actually think about staying in the Far East. I liked it out there. Two chaps and I were at one time going to buy an old tramp steamer and trade around the South Pacific. We thought that would be pretty good. I remember actually looking over the ship. The chap who was selling it said, 'Well, the engine's a bit dicky. It needs an overhaul.' Then afterwards we had a discussion in a bar, and none of us knew how to overhaul the engine of a tramp steamer. And so the idea was dropped, but the thought was there."

A lot of people think that your first book was *Non-Stop*, but it was actually *The Brightfount Diaries*, which were originally published in *The Bookseller*. Where did the idea for that come from?

"Well, it's rather funny really, because *The Bookseller* was rather serious, and published articles on bookselling, publishing, reviewing, kindred things. I wrote to the editor, and said, 'Look, you've forgotten the wretched assistant in the bookshop who actually sells these things. Why not have an article on that?' He wrote back and said, 'Would you write it?' So I wrote it, but when I sent it in I said, 'This isn't the way to deal with this. I could write you a series of fictitious diaries about working in a bookshop.' He was very agreeable, but said, 'Well, you know we don't publish fiction in *The Bookseller*, but we'll give it a try.'

"Well, of course, it was successful, because it was the only funny bit in there. It ran as a slightly discontinuous weekly column, and within a year of doing it, six publishers wrote to me and said would I turn it into a book? Six publishers! Can you believe it? And first of all was lovely Faber & Faber. So they became my publishers for a long time, and very good publishers they were."

***Non-Stop* was your first science fiction novel...**

"That's right. *Brightfount* sold surprisingly well, so they said, 'What are you going to do for an encore?', and I said, 'Well, I'm writing a science fiction novel.' 'Oh good!' they said. But it happened that my editor, Charles Monteith, and Sir Geoffrey Faber, and his wife and his daughter – who had a certain say in the running of the firm – were all keen science fiction readers. They read *Astounding*, and Charles and I, in particular, had a lot in common. Not only had he fought in Burma, but also as a boy in the '30s he had read *Modern Boy*, which was full of a particularly delectable brand of science fiction."

A lot of your American editions seem to have had the title changed or different stories included. Why?

"They haven't done that to me for a long time. When I received my complementary copies of *Hothouse* from Signet, it was called *The Long Afternoon of Earth*. It sounds like something by Anthony Trollope! I subscribe to an idea of John W Campbell's, who said that if a story is pointed enough, you can give it a one word title, so I tried to make all my first SF novels one-worders: *Non-Stop, Greybeard...*"

So they didn't check with you in advance?

"Oh no, not at all. Very high-handed. I said, 'It's much better called *Hothouse.*' They said, 'Yes, but we were afraid that booksellers would put in in the gardening section'!"

You seem equally at home with both novels and short stories.

"I love writing both novels *and* short stories. The other thing is that if you embark on a novel, you think, 'Oh bloody hell, this is going to take a year', whereas you can be shaving and go, 'That's a good idea' – and that's a short story of 5,000 words. You go down and write it. At the end of the week, it's more or less complete."

In an age when ten-volume sagas are the norm, you've only done the one trilogy, *Helliconia Spring, Summer* and *Winter*. Why three books?

"You must realise that, although I'm very productive, I also have an aspiration to be lazy. I didn't want to write *Helliconia* in three volumes, but when I considered the amount of time that had to

The SFX Interview

HEAD-TO-HEAD WITH THE STARS

BRIAN ALDISS ON BRIAN ALDISS

HE'S WRITTEN 70 BOOKS IN TOTAL, HAS BRIAN ALDISS, SO CLEARLY WE'RE NOT GOING TO LIST THEM ALL. HERE, HOWEVER, IS OUR SELECTION OF THE MAJOR ONES, WITH BRIEF COMMENTS FROM ALDISS HIMSELF...

NON-STOP (1958)

A tribe of people explore their world and discover that it is, in fact, a giant starship, and they are the *nth* generation on an intergalactic expedition.

Aldiss: "Among other things, it's a story of human beings confined within circumstances for which they were not responsible. If the book has an emotional charge, it was simply because I felt that way about my own life at the time."

HOTHOUSE (1962)

In the far future, the entire Earth has become a tropical jungle, and the moon has become lodged in geosynchronous orbit, thus enabling giant spiders to spin webs between it and the Earth.

Aldiss: "I was feeling rather nostalgic for my life in the Far East. While trying to suppress that, the jungle came bursting back, so really *Hothouse* is a kind of fantasia about what it's like to be very hot, with the sun going nova. As the story developed, I realised one had to see the shady side of Earth. I'm sure that *Hothouse* lends itself to being explained in Jungian terms."

GREYBEARD (1964)

Set in Aldiss' beloved Oxford, *Greybeard* is the story of a human race rendered sterile after an accident with biological weapons, where anybody under 50 is an anomaly.

Aldiss: "This was my attempt to transpose Thomas Hardy in science fictional terms, the way that classical music can be transposed into jazz. I've always been very fond of Thomas Hardy, and Greybeard was an attempt to do something of that sort."

REPORT ON PROBABILITY A (1968)

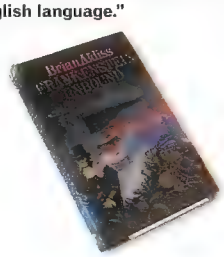
Not an easy book to understand, because nothing ever really happens. It seems to be about different levels of observation – A watching B watching C, etc. Then again, we could have misunderstood it...

Aldiss: "The favourite among my books, perhaps because it's the most condemned. However, it's been reprinted a number of times, and a lot of people like the mystery of it. When I had concluded it, I had achieved most nearly what I set out to do. Often you have a grand vision of a novel, and when you've written it, you think, 'No, that wasn't it at all.'"

BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD (1969)

The aftermath of the "Acid Head War," in which hallucinogenic bombs were dropped on Europe and America by – oh, irony! – Kuwait! Originally published as a series of stories in *New Worlds*, it's best described as "Joyce-ian" (or "very hard to read").

Aldiss: "This was such fun to write! It was so amazing to be sort of out of your mind and do those things. Everyone saw it as frightfully *avant-garde;* but I didn't see it like that at all. I just enjoyed doing it. For me, it was a marvellous free play with the English language."



FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND (1973)

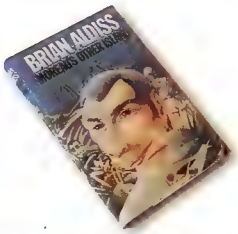
A 21st century scientist accidentally travels back in time to 19th century Switzerland, where he meets both Mary Shelley and Victor Frankenstein.

Aldiss: "It was a work of love, really. After having written *Billion Year Spree,* I thought that the most delightful novel to be captured within my net was Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,* and I wanted to draw more attention to it."

THE MALACIA TAPESTRY (1976)

Malacia is a world where humanity is descended from dinosaurs, but what would that world be like if the dinosaurs had died out aeons ago and another species entirely had become sentient and dominant?

Aldiss: "This was my beautiful book. It's my statement, really, on what it's like to be an artist. Perian de Chirolo, the artist there, speaks with my voice on the pleasures and some of the displeasures of writing."



MOREAU'S OTHER ISLAND (1980)

A US politician accidentally lands on a remote island where he discovers American-backed experiments to create "human" animals.

Aldiss: "It was my love of Wells that prompted me to do it, and above all, Wells' marvellous story of *The Island of Doctor Moreau.* I saw that that little private island could happen in the 19th century, but certainly not in the '70s, and now the whole island would probably be some sort of American possession. That's the difference between the novels, really."

HELLICONIA TRILOGY (Helliconia Spring, Helliconia Summer, Helliconia Winter) (1982-85)

Helliconia, a world in which the seasons last for centuries, is probably Brian's most impressive creation to date. A Terran observation post watches entire civilisations rise and fall on the planet's surface below...

Aldiss: "There was a scientific impetus behind this, and that was James Lovelock's Gaia theory, which I felt was such a beautiful idea it must be true. Helliconia was constructed really in the image of Gaia. Very little happens on Helliconia that doesn't happen at some time on Earth."

70 YEAR SPREE

YOU'VE NEVER READ ANY ALDISS BEFORE, SO WHERE'S THE BEST PLACE TO START?

Brian Aldiss has written so many books that the best place to start is probably at the beginning, with the accessible (if not wildly original) Non-Stop. Frankenstein Unbound *also makes a reasonable starting point – however, since most of Aldiss is currently out of print, it may well be a case of just reading what you can find. One we definitely* don't *recommend for your first taste of Aldiss, however, is* Report on Probability A. *It's good, but you won't understand it. (At least one SFX writer has failed to get more than 20 pages into it twice!)*

BRIAN ALDISS
SF BLUES

elapse on Helliconia, it entailed three sets of characters, and no-one was going to put up with that in one volume. It really had to be three. Many people said, of course, 'Why isn't it four?' since there are four seasons. But I'm not a Vivaldi. I thought three was enough."

I see you've got a map of the planet on the wall. Was *Helliconia* very carefully planned?

"Yes. I spent two years talking to people beforehand. But you see, one advantage of Oxford is that you can knock on any door, and from behind it will come one of the world's greatest archaeologists, historians or whatever, who are only too happy to talk to you. One man I consulted was JM Roberts, who is the chap who wrote *A Short History of the World* – a very good volume, rather in the steps of HG Wells."

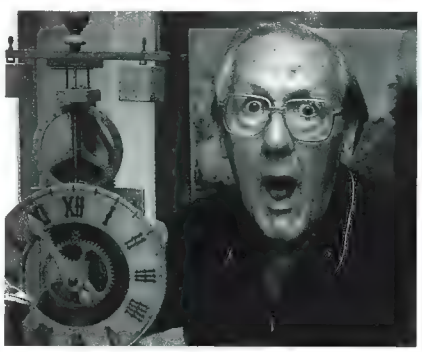
You're something of a fan of Wells yourself...

"Well, I've just come back from a four-day Wells symposium at Imperial College, and it was the best conference I've ever been to! 40 papers were given by scholars, mainly from England and the States. The whole thing was centred on *The Time Machine,* whose centenary is '95. At the end, people leaving were saying, 'I can't wait to get home to read it again!' It was very stimulating."

So what's the appeal of Wells to you?

"For one thing, he seized on some of the major discoveries of the 19th century, under which we still labour. The whole idea of the expansion of time – the age of the Earth, of the Solar System, of the Universe – these were hammer-blows to convention. Concurrent with all these, of course, was the theory of evolution, which drifts along throughout the century and finally comes to focus with Darwin's *Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man.* And, really, *The Time Machine* dramatised these great events like nothing else. I still think it's a remarkable book, and probably one of the best in all science fiction.

"The other thing you have to say is; it's so extraordinarily well-written. It's a very readable book. It's all kinds of things: It's an adventure, a mystery, it's got romance, it's certainly got a lot of social history. But, above all, the plot is fuelled by evolution. It was new, it was never done before. And I don't think anyone's done it today. I feel that writers as a whole, whether they know it or not, work under Wells' shade. I certainly do."



"I did get not just a bad press, but threatening letters, signed by God! He lived in Reigate."

Given that we're currently celebrating the centenary of *The Time Machine* as the first hard SF novel, where does your idea of *Frankenstein* as the start of SF come from?

"I was absolutely sick of people calling Hugo Gernsback 'the father of science fiction.' He published his magazines in the '20s, and yet he was serialising other science fiction writers: Wells, Conan Doyle... He can't have been the father of it if it already existed, it's ridiculous. Casting around, I first thought – in a very irresponsible way – 'What a marvellous leg-pull if there was a mother of science fiction.' It would shut them all up.

"Then I started thinking about *Frankenstein,* which I truly think is a wonderful and complex novel. The essence of it is that the scientist, Victor Frankenstein, actually takes over the powers of God, and by scientific means creates life from death. This is a radical departure. Okay, there were lots of similar pacts with the Devil and all this kind of thing, but it's quite clear in *Frankenstein* that nothing is doing while he's going for alchemy or other pseudo-sciences. It only starts to work when he goes to Ingoldstat University in Germany, and studies what's happening in the laboratory, and he is told by the professors, 'Throw away that old junk. They promised everything and delivered nothing.' Well, he creates life. And it's this taking of power into human hands that is really central to science fiction.

"Then in Wells' *The Time Machine,* the time traveller sees the world fall into decay and visits the end of the planet. The power is his to do it; it's still about power, and that seems to be the essence of science fiction. This is why I think you can, without much reserve, point to *Frankenstein* as being the great progenitor. You can see things before it that have a relationship, as *homo sapiens* have a relationship with the great apes – *Gulliver's Travels,* bits of Homer – but if you want a demarcation line somewhere then you start with *Frankenstein.* Of course, once that was out in *Billion Year Spree,* the burgeoning scholarship in the United States seized upon it. It saved them having to teach Gilgamesh and Dante! They could start with something that was actually readable and enjoyable."

***Billion Year Spree* came out the same year as *Frankenstein Unbound.* Did the one inspire the other?**

"I always imagined that the science fiction field was the one field where you were free to do something new. That was the excitement of it, and that's what I felt I was doing. And since *Hothouse* was very well received, I thought 'This time, I'll really knock 'em rigid!' And so I produced *Report on Probability A* and *Barefoot in the Head!*

"But you must realise that there's a great gulf between what is marvellous to write and what is marvellous to read. Although both those books have had their avid supporters, the average fan actually wanted me to go on forever re-writing *Hothouse* and *Non-Stop* and things of that ilk, and I wasn't prepared to do that. I did get not just a bad press, but threatening letters signed by God! He lived in Reigate... 'Dear Aldiss, I'm going to come and strike you down for writing *Barefoot in the Head.* Yours truly, God.' Really crap, and I thought, 'Forget it.'

"Meanwhile, I was having a great success with the non-SF Stubbs saga: *The Hand-Reared Boy, A Soldier Erect* and *A Rude Awakening.* So I thought, 'I'm perfectly able to write ordinary novels, maybe I won't write any more science fiction.' It sounds ridiculous, but I thought, 'Before I do, I'll write a history of science fiction,' so I wrote *Billion Year Spree.* At the end of it, surrounded by rooms full of books and magazines, I thought, 'It's *Frankenstein* that has my heart.' And then I thought I could perhaps write an exegetical novel to try and explain it a little to people. And after I'd written *Frankenstein Unbound,* I thought, 'What wonderful freedoms in the science fiction field.' I've been writing it ever since really."

You followed it up quite a few years later with *Dracula Unbound*...

"There was genuine inspiration behind *Frankenstein Unbound.* I do think it's really a creative book in its own right, even if it's under the shadow of Mary Shelley. When Roger Corman filmed *Frankenstein Unbound,* he was such a nice guy. We had him over, had a meal and were chatting, and I said, 'Well, Roger, you'll have to do a sequel.' He said, 'What's that?' I said, 'You'll have to do *Dracula Unbound,* won't you?' and he was quite taken with the idea. We went out to Italy and saw him filming *Frankenstein Unbound* – now available on video! So I actually wrote *Dracula Unbound* as a screenplay and sent it to Roger.

"At the same time, I got Roger to be Guest of Honour at the Conference of the Fantastic in Florida. He was a great success. He's a marvellous guy, very amusing. But he said to me then, 'I can't film this, Brian.' He said a very nice, modest thing, very typical of the man. He said, 'I'm a cheapo outfit.' So having done the screenplay; all right, you make a novel of it. And, in fact, it's very filmic. If you read it, you can see that. I don't think it's a patch on *Frankenstein Unbound.* That's my opinion, but there are people who like it."

I found a copy of *A Is For Brian* a few years ago... ***[An anthology of anecdotes and stories by Brian's friends and colleagues, which was compiled for his 65th birthday as a surprise present. – Ed]***

"The funny thing is, it was mainly done in *this* house. It was done between Margaret and my buddy in London, Frank Hatherley, and I never knew a thing about it. I think this is proof of what an innocent character I am. They had a thrash up at the Groucho Club, disguised as a celebration for *Interzone* magazine, and I swanned up there that

afternoon with no idea that there was this *This Is Your Life* scenario. The funny thing is, my kids had corralled the celebrated guests in the pub next door. They were ushering Doris Lessing and Kingsley Amis, going, 'Don't go in there! Come in here!' I can't tell you; it was absolutely bizarre."

You updated *Billion Year Spree* into *Trillion Year Spree*. Are we going to see a *Quadrillion Year Spree*?

"I think David Wingrove and I might do *Zillion Year Spree*. There are tentative approaches to do a *Zillion Year Spree* on CD-ROM, which would be a sensible thing to do, really. I'd quite like to do it, but I'd want to do it in my own way – and, of course, with a CD-ROM you haven't quite got the control that you've got over a book. I wouldn't want it stuffed full with clips from B-feature horror movies. I've no objection to B-feature horror movies, but I just think there should be a more intellectual approach to the genre."

Why do you think science fiction still has this terribly low standing among the general populace?

"Well, I don't know. I believe that a lot of the populace believe it's beneath contempt, but there are other people who actually have a fear of it, who think they wouldn't understand it. So often have I heard people say, 'I wouldn't understand it if I read it.' I suppose it's the word 'science' there. But also, the term 'future,' which to us is so alluring – it's a sexy, juicy word – is a derivative from the Latin verb esse 'to be.' It's about being! But to many people this term 'future' is terrifying. What's going to happen in the future? The essence of science fiction is imagination, and I suppose that many people's lives are such a struggle that they don't want to imagine."

"I feel that writers as a whole, whether they know it or not, work under Wells' shade. I certainly do..."

Let's talk about this new book of yours, *The Secret of this Book*. This is a collection of short stories and other bits and bobs you've written over the past couple of years...

"Yes, but it's more than that. It's the whole philosophy of a book when you unravel it! I mustn't tell you what the secret is."

When I've finished reading it, will I understand what the secret of this book is?

"Well, that depends on your IQ! Well, I suppose so, yes. I think there might be more than one answer to that question. I wanted to call it *Common Clay*, which is quite ordinary and straightforward, but then my editor at HarperCollins, Malcolm Edwards, said, 'The sales force thinks that this is a very bad title. Can we call it something else?' And I really couldn't think of anything to call it, so in the end I thought, 'I'll change things a little and call it *The Secret of this Book*.' In the United States it will be published as *Common Clay* next year."

So that's America getting the right title and us getting the wrong one...

"Yes, just for a change!"

One of the stories in here is "Horsemeat," which I seem to recall was quite controversial when it was first published in *Interzone*.

"The controversy was, well, I don't want to give away the central gimmick, but it was regarded as rather unpleasant. Surprise, surprise. I did at that time get involved with a really unhappy correspondent in America, who was damning me for this story, and claimed that it had made her mentally ill and so on. I had long letters, and the terrible thing is that the more placatory you are – the kinder, gentler, you are – the more you somehow seem to be moving into a trap, and the more the other person feels entrapped. It's a very difficult situation. I wish I'd kept that correspondence separate, because there was a lot of psychological interest in it really. That was all spurred on by *Horsemeat*. It's funny, because a lot of people obviously hated it very greatly. I was honour-bound to put it in *The Secret of this Book*."

I saw you at Nottingham several years ago in your revue with Ken Campbell, *Science Fiction Blues*...

"That was when we first started it. It was our second venue and the people there were so casual. We had a lot of difficulties. I engaged a media agent – Frank Hatherley – who came up to me one day and said, 'How about a bit of acting? I've put together an evening's revue based on your work.' He, quite off his own back, put together *SF Blues*, so that's what we did. Over the years, it's developed and changed as we've put in new sketches. I think it's probably funnier than it was. Some of the dreadful things we did at first were an absolute ordeal, and we soon dropped those. It's a better show, now we've gone upmarket a bit...

"The last two gigs we've done have been at Cheltenham Literary Festival and Brighton Literary Festival. And very successful they were too. And after years of loathing my old school, they've dug up these stories and I'm rather flavour of the month there. They're opening a marvellous new English, drama and music centre, and so I'm going to perform for them with a different troupe – I'm just getting together a little programme which we'll do at the end of September. It's fun to do. I don't get stage fright, and you get an immediate response from the audience. You write a novel, and, all right, you get a few reviews after a year. But with this, if they don't like it they'll throw a tomato at you!"

What was this other play, the Philip K Dick one?

"Oh, that was great! That's *Kindred Blood in Kensington Gore*. I performed that over here and in the States. I play Philip K Dick in the after-life, and a very jazzy young actress plays a sort of varied, moving role, and ends up revealing herself as VALIS. *[Vast Active Living Intelligence System, a concept of the structure of meaning featured in PKD's self-analytical VALIS trilogy – Ed]* It's a kind of commentary on Dick's life."

What's the academic appeal of Philip K Dick? Why is there so much written about him? There aren't many plays written about, say, Asimov.

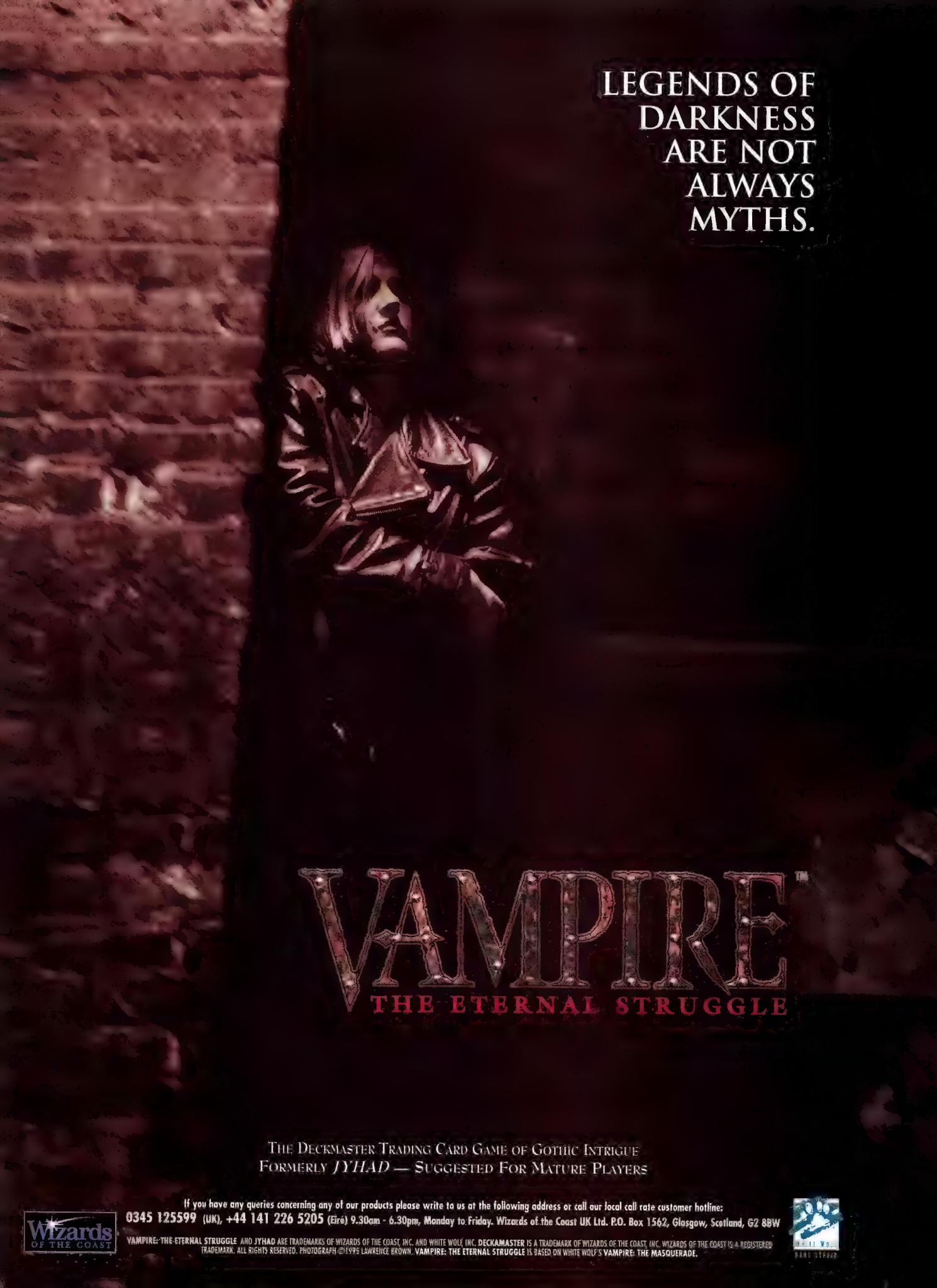
"You've challenged me to write a play about Asimov! Well, it's hard to define. I only know this: That, at a time when everyone was talking about Robert A Heinlein, a few of us were reading Philip K Dick and thinking he was much better. What do I mean by 'much better'? That the true pizazz was in Dick; that awful black humour, *that* seemed to me the essence of SF. A man obviously balanced precariously on the brink of sanity. And then, of course, the poor guy did go round the twist in the end. I didn't like the right-wing aspects of Heinlein's stuff, which I thought became more obtrusive in *Starship Troopers*, for instance. But early on he wrote *Universe*, about this multi-generation starship, and while reading Heinlein I thought, 'Pardon my ambition, but this could be done so much better.' That's how I wrote *Non-Stop!* It was a response to Heinlein. I never sought to conceal the fact."

Who do you read now?

"Oh, I don't read much at all... I've already read so much that many of the tropes of science fiction have become over-familiar. I read a lot of travel books. I travel a lot myself – I recently came back from Turkmenistan – so that interests me. The last half of *Somewhere East of Life* is set in Turkmenistan. I hope and think that *Somewhere East of Life* is one of my best novels actually – because it's full of awful things and joyful visions, blackly funny and decently written."

Brian Aldiss, thank you very much.

Brian Aldiss will be a Guest of Honour at this year's Novacon (3-5 November, Chamberlain Hotel, Birmingham – see Fantastic Days for further details, page 113) along with Harry Harrison, Bob Shaw and Iain Banks.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A GIRL & HER DOG

NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN. OR, INDEED, NEVER SAY "DOCTOR, LOOK!" AGAIN. ELIZABETH SLADEN KEEPS TRYING TO SAY GOODBYE TO HER ROLE AS ONE OF DOCTOR WHO'S MOST POPULAR ASSISTANTS, SARAH JANE SMITH, BUT, AS **DAVE GOLDER** FINDS OUT, SOMETIMES A GIRL JUST CAN'T SAY NO...

"Oh God! Duh... duh... duh... duh... duh..." That's the sound of Lis Sladen's impression of K9 *rushing* into action. "If you're doing a series which is called *K9 and Company*, you've really got to spend some money on the star. But we had no money, so we were stuck with what we had. There was one point where we were rushing to save the universe, and they asked me if I could hold the door open for the bloody dog!"

It was, by *Doctor Who* standards, a momentous occasion. Christmas 1981, and *Doctor Who* had spawned its first ever spin off – a 50-minute vehicle for the Timelord's robot pooch called *K9 and Company*. And Lis Sladen, who played the unlikely-attired Sarah Jane Smith from the late Pertwee and early Tom Baker years, became the first actress to reprise her role as a companion.

Momentous indeed – for *Who* fans. But for Lis Sladen – some 14 years on now, sipping cappuccino in a West London coffee shop – it's but a dim memory.

"I actually had to ask someone about *K9 and Company*," she admits. "You probably

"The idea behind the title sequence," Sladen explains, "was to have it looking very *Hart to Hart*, starting with me skidding the car to a halt. But I really didn't know what I was doing, and it ended up a bit of a mess really."

© Rob Scott

know more than I do. I'd almost forgotten about the show..."

It begins to appear that Lis might be ever-so slightly embarrassed by the whole *K9 and Company* debacle...

"I hear that weeks were taken away from the producer by the BBC. *Weeks*. We just had to get out there and do it. It was very under-timed and under budget. But hats off to John [Nathan Turner] for getting it off the ground."

So would she have played the part if it had gone to a series?

"Oh yes. God, yes. It's work," she laughs, "and it usually gets better as you go along. My mistake was trying to play the character like the old Sarah Jane. I should have played her in a completely different way."

LIS, IT SOON BECOMES CLEAR, LOVES THE character of Sarah Jane Smith, despite once vowing to "never" play her again. In fact, she's made more comebacks than Status Quo – most recently returning for *Downtime*, a Doctor Who Appreciation Society-funded video due out later this year.

The comeback trail, which started with *K9 and Company*, also includes her appearance in the 20th anniversary special *The Five Doctors* in 1983...

"Well, it just had to be done," she grins. "It was such a great atmosphere."

Comeback number three was the *Children in Need* special in 1993:

"Everyone was doing it and it was a good cause. So I felt I was really obliged."

Next, in 1993, Sarah was back on radio, with Jon Pertwee, in *The Paradise of Death*...

"It's wonderful to do her on the radio. I can get away with being 14 years older. The only thing I don't understand is why they still haven't scheduled the second radio series yet – *Ghosts of N-Space*. I heard a rumour that it was all to do with the BBC promising Spielberg they wouldn't put anything out until he got his thing off the ground."

The latest "farewell tour" is with *Downtime*. So why did she agree to come back – and this time in the flesh, as it were?

"Well, the Doctor isn't in it. If I was with the Doctor, I would have to revert to my old role, and I'm not that age any more. But because the Doctor wasn't there, and it was set in the present day, and I can play Sarah the age I am now, it might work. If I thought what I was doing now would in any way denigrate what Sarah was, I wouldn't do it. I've taken a chance with *Downtime*, but it was a *very* good script. I'm not talking Shakespeare, but it worked as *Doctor Who*."

If that sounds like a lot of luvvie, darling self-justification, you might be surprised to find that Lis has a refreshingly pragmatic view on her position in the *Doctor Who* universe. She is, for example, one of the few female *Who* companions who doesn't mind the "screaming girlie" tag...

"Oh, no-one would bloody admit to screaming. I screamed a lot. But listen, if you saw a six foot monster and fell down a 60 foot bloody hole, wouldn't *you* scream?"

She also candidly admits to playing the "straight" man... "You had to be clever to make 'Doctor, *look!*' sound different in 78 episodes, I can tell you," she laughs.

This despite the fact that when she was introduced she was supposed to be a completely new type of companion.

"Ha, ha. They always say that, don't they? They wanted a more liberated, independent woman, so they gave her this job as a journalist. But if you look at it, the first story *(The Time Warrior,* 1973) was like that, but afterwards they never let Sarah be as strong again. She quickly reverted to format – but then it's a format that works."

RECENTLY, LIS HAS BEEN GETTING BACK INTO the convention circuit after a few years' break. The comeback queen strikes again?

"Well, it actually feels fresh again. That's why I stopped doing cons. It also coincided with my daughter being born, but really I thought I haven't got anything new to add. But now, thanks to the release of the videos, there's a whole new audience. I didn't realise that until a couple of years ago when I went to my daughter's school, and the children were playing Daleks in the playground!"

Suddenly, Lis can start telling all those old stories over again. Stories like how she got to be the Doctor's assistant in the first place...

"The story goes that Barry stood behind me, and went like that to Jon [she does a thumbs up], meaning, 'She's done a good audition, does she look right?' Then Jon went behind me, while Barry came in front and talked to me, and Jon gave the thumbs up too. I was offered the job there and then."

SARAH'S CONTINUING POPULARITY AS A companion is helped by the fact that nearly all her stories have now been released on video. Certainly, her time on *Who* coincided with the peak of the show's success. The Tom Baker-Sarah Jane Smith pairing was *very* popular.

"They called us into the office one day," Lis remembers, "and the producer Philip Hinchcliffe was nearly dancing on the table. 18 million viewers. It wasn't until I left that I realised how highly people thought of it."

And the reason?

"Tom and I just hit it off, and it shows. When that happens it's wonderful. And he's from Liverpool too, so we shared the same sort of humour."

Apart from *Doctor Who*, Lis has also appeared in a number of other genre TV shows, including an episode of the early '70s ecological drama *Doomwatch* (coincidentally written by Terence Dudley, who scripted *K9 and Company)*, and then, in the early '80s, in a BBC classics version of *Gulliver in Lilliput,* directed by ex-*Who* producer Barry Letts.

Her latest project is a pre-school educational series, which she's doing with her husband Brian Miller.

"Oh, what's it called? Oh yes, *Number Time*. I don't know when it's coming out, but it's lovely. It's like Russ Abbott for children. I did eight sketches and Brian did 11. I get to do a Cilla Black impression!"

At which point, our photographer arrives. Lis's jaw drops at the sight of arc lights, tripods and huge lenses. "Usually, when someone says can they take a picture they bring a little automatic thing."

It suddenly dawns on me that Lis thinks she's being interviewed for a fanzine. When I show her a copy of SFX, she's impressed...

"Oh God. I'm in the glossies!" she laughs. "My daughter *will* be pleased."

Most of the Sarah Jane Doctor Who *episodes are currently available on BBC Video, as is* K9 and Company *(reviewed last issue).*

"Tom [Baker] and I just hit it off, and it shows... When that happens it's wonderful. And he's from Liverpool too, so we shared the same sort of humour..."

"You had to be very clever to make 'Doctor, *look!*' sound different in 78 episodes, I can tell you."

A Live! Special Report

THE WORLD'S GREATEST SF EVENT COMES TO BRITAIN...

INTERSECTION: WORLDCON '95

THE SCOTTISH EXHIBITION & CONFERENCE CENTRE, GLASGOW, 24-28 AUGUST 1995

MOST CONVENTIONS, OF THE KIND WE NORMALLY REPORT ON IN LIVE!, ARE RELATIVELY SMALL AFFAIRS – A FEW HUNDRED FANS AND A BAR, THAT KIND OF THING. NOT SO WITH INTERSECTION. WITH 5,000 SF FANS THROUGH THE DOORS OF THE SECC OVER FIVE DAYS, IT DWARFED ALL SIMILAR EVENTS – BUT THEN SO IT SHOULD, BEING A WORLDCON. **MJ SIMPSON**'S FACE LIGHTS UP IN GLEE...

The main concourse of the SECC in Glasgow, full of "weirdos in funny costumes," if you want to believe the tabloid press.

It's 5,000 fans milling about talking about the finer points of time travel or vampire sex. It's arguing viewpoints you don't even quite believe in yourself, both on panels and at the bar. It's a chance to meet some of your all-time heroes (especially if your heroes happen to be of the literary variety). It is, above all, an excuse to get monumentally slaughtered...

We're talking, of course, about the Worldcon, science fiction's premiere get-together. Every eight years or so, the event – which has grown from a handful of fans to many thousands over its 53 year history – comes to this country. Luckily for the launch of SFX, 1995 happened one of those years, making Intersection – as this year's event was called – the fifth Worldcon the UK has hosted, and the first in Scotland. For us, this was an opportunity not to miss, and not just because of the chance to do a bit of promotional flag-waving for the mag to an international audience – if there's a problem with the Worldcon (and it's the sort of problem you're pleased to have), it's that there's simply too much to see and do...

The main location for the event was the cavernous Scottish Exhibition & Conference Centre (SECC), positioned on the banks of the Clyde. The programme ran from Thursday 24th to Monday 28th August, kicking off each day at

Best notice of the convention:

Following the non-appearance of a panel on false messiahs: "The Second Coming has been cancelled."

Acorns, mighty trees and all that...

A brief review of the highlights from 56 years of Worldcons

1939 Nycon 1
200 US fans gather in New York for the first Worldcon. Frank R Paul was the Guest of Honour.

1941 Denvention I
The smallest Worldcon ever is held in Denver, with Robert Heinlein as GoH and only 90 attendees. No more Worldcons were held until 1946.

1948 Torcon I
The first Worldcon to take place outside the USA. 200 fans hit Toronto; Robert Bloch was GoH.

1957 Loncon I
Worldcon comes to Britain! 268 fans assemble at the King's Court Hotel, London to see John W Campbell Jnr.

1965 Loncon II
Eight years later, the venue has shifted to the Mount Royal Hotel. Brian Aldiss is the GoH and the head count has gone up to a hefty 350.

1967 Nycon III
Attendance hits four figures for the first time! 1,500 fans descend on New York to see Lester Del Rey.

1970 Heicon '70
The first Worldcon on mainland Europe is in Heidelburg. Guests include Ted Tubb, Bob Silverberg and German author Herbert W Franke. There are around 620 attendees.

1975 AussieCon One
Ursula K LeGuin is among the guests at the first Australian Worldcon, which boasts some 606 members.

1979 Seacon '79
The Brighton Metropole hosts the first British Worldcon for 14 years. Guests Brian Aldiss and Fritz Leiber, plus 3,112 other people, make this the third biggest Worldcon so far.

1984 LAcon II
Gordon R Dickson is GoH at the largest Worldcon ever; 8,365 fans gather in Anaheim, California.

1987 Conspiracy '87
The fourth British Worldcon has eight guests, including Doris Lessing, Alfred Bester, Jim Burns, Ray Harryhausen and Dave Langford. 5,300 people gather in the Brighton Metropole.

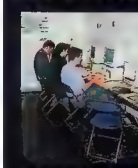
1990 ConFiction
Harry Harrison, Joe Haldeman and Chelsea Quinn Yarbro are among the guests at the Dutch Worldcon, which has 3,580 members.

1995 Intersection
Around 5,000... Hang on, just read the main article, will ya?

Nothing to do?

Then you just ain't looking...

There were 557 scheduled events at Intersection, not including films, gaming, videos, signings and parties. To give you some idea what it was like, here are just a few of the panel titles: Great Cover! Shame About The Game!; 17th Century Schizoid Fan; Need Hard SF Be Hard?; Why Is So Much Crap Published?; Authors Are Just Role-Players Without Friends; A Cruise Through The Hard Fantasy Archipelago; Pass Me The Deus Ex Machina; Cannot Load File "Sistine Chapel"; Is There Life After Intersection?; Dr Horror's Hangover Cures; The Fan In The High Castle; Brewing And Distilling In Space; The Word For World Is Dingblat; and I'm Too Sexy For My Beany...



Intersection was the first "on-line" UK Worldcon.

Brian Aldiss (above right) thought the convention was "marvellous".

Forry Ackerman holding court at a "kaffeeklatcsh".

Magic: The Gathering can have some rather odd side-effects...

Worldcon – it's all about making friends, you know!

10.00am and continuing through until 6.00pm, at which point the focus transferred from the SECC to various hotels in Glasgow's city centre, including the Forte Crest and Central. Rare indeed was the fan who wasn't still partying well into the wee small hours... every night.

"Rare indeed was the fan who wasn't still partying well into the wee small hours of the night... every night."

So, what was there to see and do? Well, the most obvious elements of the programming, continuing throughout the whole event, were the discussion panels, focussing on all aspects of science fiction, fantasy, horror, "real" science, gaming, filk music (science fiction folk music, would you believe?), fanzines and conventions. Alongside there were author readings and signing sessions, videos and films, Guest of Honour talks and slide shows, silly games and a huge dealers' room. During the day there were usually at least 19 or 20 things happening at once, giving you little excuse to be bored. Like I said, if anything the biggest problem was that there was just too much to do, and it was certainly impossible to attend everything you wanted. Something I missed, for instance – and an interesting innovation – were the many "Kaffeeklatsches", chances for a dozen or so fans to chat informally with an SF notable over a cup of coffee. There was a strong gay element to the programme throughout too, perhaps inspired by the presence of Guest of Honour Samuel R Delaney.

Problems? Well, there were the inevitable handful of technical hitches to contend with – most notably the microphones, which seemed to be incapable of picking up any noise emanating from more than one inch away – but no more than would be expected at an event of this size and complexity. Because of this, and because the Fan Programme and Science Programme were held in partitioned-off sections of one big room – the aircraft hanger that is SECC Hall 4 – certain panels found themselves drowned out by the background hubbub. There were occasional moments of slightly heavy-handed officiousness – such as when the entire Masquerade (the con's costume competition) was stopped, the lights turned on and the audience told, like some bunch of naughty schoolchildren, that the show wouldn't continue until the idiots who had used flash photography, when specifically asked not to, owned up and left the auditorium – but these were very rare, and in general the whole event was run efficiently, and with good

"Weirdos in stupid costumes"

So, how many of these SF fans *did* actually dress up?

Despite the impression given by the press, very few people at the con actually wore fancy dress costumes. However, amongst those spotted by the SFX posse were Zaphod Beeblebrox, Major Kira, someone from *Babylon 5*, a Cyberman, a Sea Devil, The Wizard of Speed and Time and Alan Tracy, plus a wide variety of imaginative, non-specific SF and fantasy costumes.

It's nice to see the traditional science fiction fan's costume, the propeller beany hat, is not yet extinct, and a fair few examples were to be seen at Intersection. Most people, however, plumped for the even more traditional combination of badges, beer-guts and beards.

There was one event, of course, which was costume-heavy – the Worldcon Masquerade, a lengthy, Miss World-like event held on the Saturday night, which saw a wide variety of costumes in competition, many of which had taken months, or even years, to create. The whole event was a bit of a hoot, and hard to take seriously. For a taste of the sort of costumes on show – many of which seemed to have only the most tenuous of links with science fiction – we present an unrepresentative cross section here...

A certain phrase which includes the words "dark alley" comes to mind.

What would a Scottish Worldcon be without its very own Nessie?

This is what all the trendiest aliens are getting married in this year.

"It's behind you." "Oh no it isn't." "Oh yes it is." "Oh no it isn't." Etc.

Best printing error of the convention:

Winner (from an advert in the Pocket Programme Book): Wizards of the Coast referring to themselves in an ad as "Wizards of the Cost."

Runner up (from the Pocket Programme Book): "The basic idea is that due to mass flow and back reaction, one end of a natural wormhole will become Greg Benford."

Who Goes There?

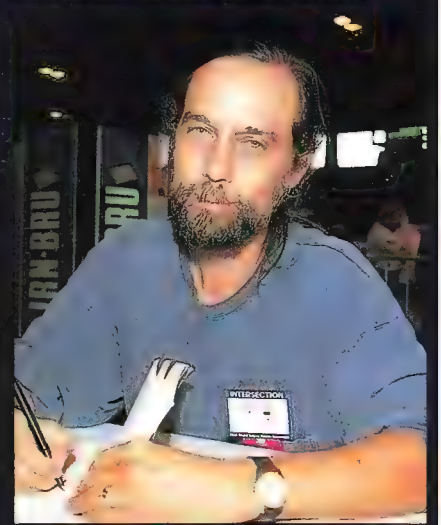
Guests of honour, and guests who weren't

Intersection had seven guests of honour. These are the people who get invited, don't have to pay to get in, and have loads of food and drink provided for them. This year the privileged elite were: Samuel R Delaney (author of the *Neveryon* novels, *Babel 17*, etc), Gerry Anderson (creator of *Thunderbirds*, *Captain Scarlet*, *Space 1999*, oh come on, you know who we mean), Les Edwards (fantasy and SF artist), Vin̊ Clark (an active SF fan for over four decades with, apparently, the most amazing collection of fanzines the world has ever known), Peter Morwood and Diane Duane (husband-and-wife authors, who presented the Hugo awards ceremony at the convention) and Mike Jittlov (film-maker, best known for the low-budget, fx-laden *The Wizard of Speed and Time*).

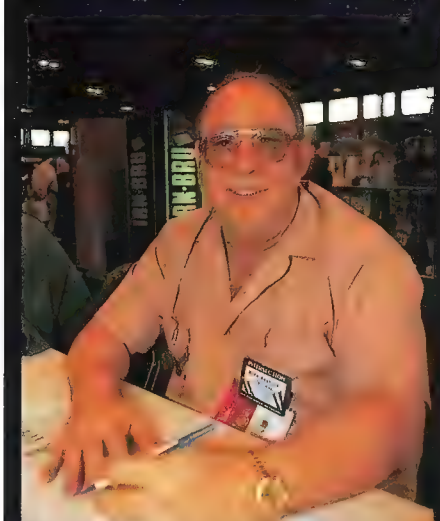
Also in attendance over the weekend were (deep breath): Forrest J Ackerman (the man with more SF memorabilia and anecdotes than a furnace-ful of Trekkers), Brian Aldiss, Harry Harrison, Iain Banks (who seemed to be followed by an entourage the whole time), Terry Pratchett (avec hat), Tom Holt, Joe Haldeman, Kevin J Anderson, Allen Steele, Sue Thomas, Jonathan Wylie, Robert Silverberg, Christopher Priest, Jeff Noon, Brian Stableford, Anne McCaffrey, Bob Shaw, Norman Spinrad, Suzy McKee Charnas, Katherine Kurtz, Mike Resnick, Stephen Baxter, Paul J McAuley, Jack Cohen, Anne Gay, Gardner Dozois, Janny Wurts, Jim Burns, Michael Scott Rohan, Greg Benford, Lois McMaster Bujold, Harry Turtledove, Esther Friesner, Craig Shaw Gardner, Colin Greenland, David Wingrove, David Gerrold, Terry Brooks, George RR Martin, Graham Joyce, Geoff Ryman, Guy Gavriel Kay, Gary Kilworth, Dave Hardy, Charles de Lint, Kim Newman (whose *Mash* impression during the Hugo Awards was very, um, loud) and many others of whom we have hazy recollections.

One of the Guests of Honour, Samuel R Delaney.

Brian Stableford, nominated for the Best Novella Hugo.



Charles De Lint, a Canadian SF author born in Holland!


Happy Hugo winner, Mike Resnick (Best Novella).

Ian Watson, who taught English in Tanzania and Tokyo!

humour. Certainly, such minor irritations didn't detract from the overall positive atmosphere.

ONE EXCELLENT ASPECT OF THE LAYOUT OF THE SECC was that, in order to reach anywhere, you had to walk past or through other areas, which greatly increased your chances of meeting people. Ultimately, this is what a Worldcon is all about – meeting friends both old and new, from all over the planet. There were attendees at Intersection from as far apart as Australia and Rumania, Venezuela and Japan.

One Turkish fan, who was serving in his country's army, managed to get leave from his sentry duty, somehow obtain an exit visa, and make his way across Europe to Glasgow. On registering at Intersection, he volunteered to help out – and was promptly given a steward's ribbon and set to sentry duty on Hall 5! At least he was ideally suited to the job.

Strange Reports

Intersection vs the press

Press coverage of Intersection surprised no-one by, in the main, not letting the truth get in the way of a good story. In particular, *The Sunday Mail* (a Scottish tabloid) caused much amusement with its piece "It's science friction!", subtitled, "Weirdos' show is a rip-off, says mum."

What was going on? Well, apparently somebody had spent £90 to get herself and three children into the con, thinking it was a *Star Trek* exhibition(!), only to find it was "just a few stalls and a bunch of weirdos in stupid costumes". The report conspicuously failed to mention the fact that the vacuous individual in question was, in fact, given her money back.

TV coverage was little better. Channel Four's *Beam Me Up, Scotty* was confidently expected by most attendees to be a load of rubbish and – in that respect – did not disappoint, but full marks to *The Big Breakfast*, who showed a copy of SFX in its lead-up to the Worldcon.

Eastern Europeans were there in force too. About 20 or so Croatians were expected to turn up, but in the end about 120 attended – a group whose inability to understand the English phrase "Maximum Lift Capacity: 8 Persons" led to numerous people being stranded atop the 28-storey YMCA. The subject of Croatians and lifts became a running joke throughout the con.

While the food and drink on-site was hideously expensive, there were many bargains to be nabbed among the huge variety of books, magazines, comics and collectables in the Dealers' Room. Alongside these were some very nice – but very expensive – items: a first edition of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*, anybody? Or an unpublished Cordwainer Smith manuscript? Or perhaps an unpainted prototype Boba Fett figure? Most of the SFX team left Glasgow at least a little lighter of pocket...

ALTHOUGH THE DAYS WERE PACKED, THE convention really started swinging in the evenings. Dune, or "The Sand Of Music" was Friday's highlight; an inspired dramatic presentation of Frank Herbert's epic using three actors, minimal props and costumes, and a tape

Best T-shirt of the convention:

Winner: "Gandalf and Aragorn went in the van." (With a cartoon of the two Tolkien characters in a Ford Transit!)
Runner-up: "Free the Babylon 5."

We know that you can hear us, Earthmen...

Get the news, as it happens

Convention newsletters are are a popular aspect of Worldcons; Intersection's was called *Voice of the Mysterons*, in honour of Gerry Anderson. It ran to 15 issues over the five days, plus a pre-con issue zero and an un-numbered John Brunner tribute issue.

VotM printed programme changes, party times and locations, important announcements and overheard quotes. Spookily, nearly every issue had at least one headline with the word "Pratchett" in it...

There were also two spoof copies in the form of *Vice of the Mooseterons*, a slightly less reliable journal.

of Julie Andrews songs. Saturday saw Iain Banks among the contestants on Have I Got Fandom For You?, a hilarious SF version the TV show. Sample questions included: "Which is the odd one out from Michael Moorcock, Doris Lessing, HG Wells and Isaac Asimov?" (Answer: Lessing, Wells and Asimov are all really dead, whereas Mike Moorcock once pretended to be dead for tax reasons!) Also: "Who was once described as a 'Top Ten Scots Fan Babe'?" (See SFX4.)

Sunday was "Lurve Night", featuring discussions about romance on the Internet and sex in fandom, followed by Fannish Blind Date, in which Ed Wood (a certain SFX writer in full *Glen Or Glenda* get-up) was picked by a Vulcan Ambassadress who was looking for a complimentarily illogical partner!

Every night also saw plenty of parties, most of them thrown by committees bidding for future Worldcons – Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston and Niagara Falls all hoped to swing the voting their way for the 1998 site selection (Baltimore won), while other parties promoted Zagreb, Australia and Antarctica in 1999 ("Antarctica is a sunny South Seas island with huge white beaches!"), Kansas City and Chicago in 2000, Boston in 2001, and – working on a very long-range project – Moscow in 2017! Thursday night's "Minneapolis in '73" party was a temporal anomaly based on the fact that some people prefer throwing bid parties to actually running Worldcons, although the team responsible are worried that their children may end up running the event in 2073! All bid parties featured copious quantities of free drinks, the American's Oreos proving particularly popular.

"Every night saw parties thrown by committees bidding to host future Worldcons. The 'Minneapolis in '73' party was a temporal anomaly based on the fact that some people prefer throwing bid parties to running conventions."

THERE WAS ONE UNEXPECTED LOWPOINT TO THE whole event – the death of author John Brunner. We're running a tribute to him on page 50 this issue, with reviews of his major works by some of his colleagues and contemporaries, so I won't go over the same ground here, except to say that the Intersection team should be congratulated for handling such a potentially disastrous occurrence so smoothly, and with such good taste. Well done.

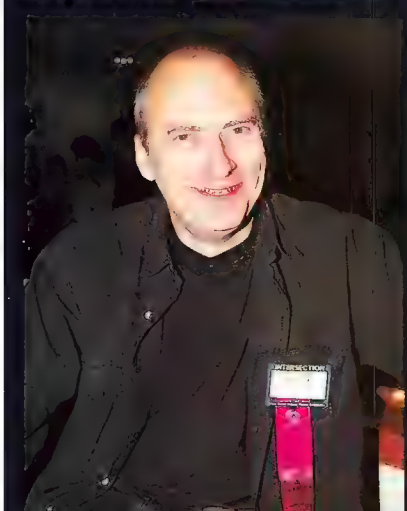
In fact, well done all round, really. Overall, Worldcon 1995 was deemed a success by the vast majority of people who attended (Scottish mothers aside). Everyone had a great time, and British fandom showed that it can hold its own with the best of them. SFX extends a hearty congratulations to all responsible for Intersection, from the co-chairs to the lowliest gophers. Good work folks, and roll on the next British Worldcon (which will probably sometime early next century)...

Funky Ribbon

You are what you wear...

Positions of responsibility at Worldcons are indicated by the addition of coloured ribbons to the name-badges all attendees have to wear. Different colours show whether the person in question is a committee member, steward, security officer, gopher, dealer or whatever. These ribbons are highly prized, and large collections can be built up over the course of a con.

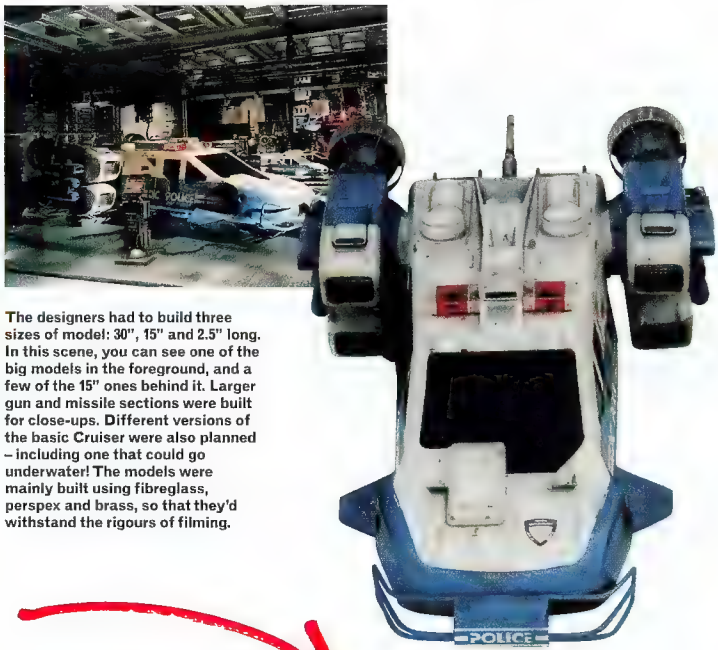
Among the harder-to-get ribbons at Intersection were "Lady From Hell" (particularly difficult for male attendees), and "Tact Free Zone" (surprisingly easy for some...). The rarest of all, however, was the unique "Exhibit" ribbon, awarded to someone who stood still for too long in the art show!



John Clute wearing his con badge with pride.

One result of going to too many late night bid parties. You honestly don't want to know what the other results are...

The 30" Police Cruiser model looks its best when stationed on an appropriately sized set. "It's the paint job on a model like this that gives it scale as much as anything," says Bill Pearson. Three of the 30" models were blown up in the course of filming the 24 episodes, while buildings originally created for films like *Batman* and *Nostradamus* were used to flesh out the model set for Demeter City.

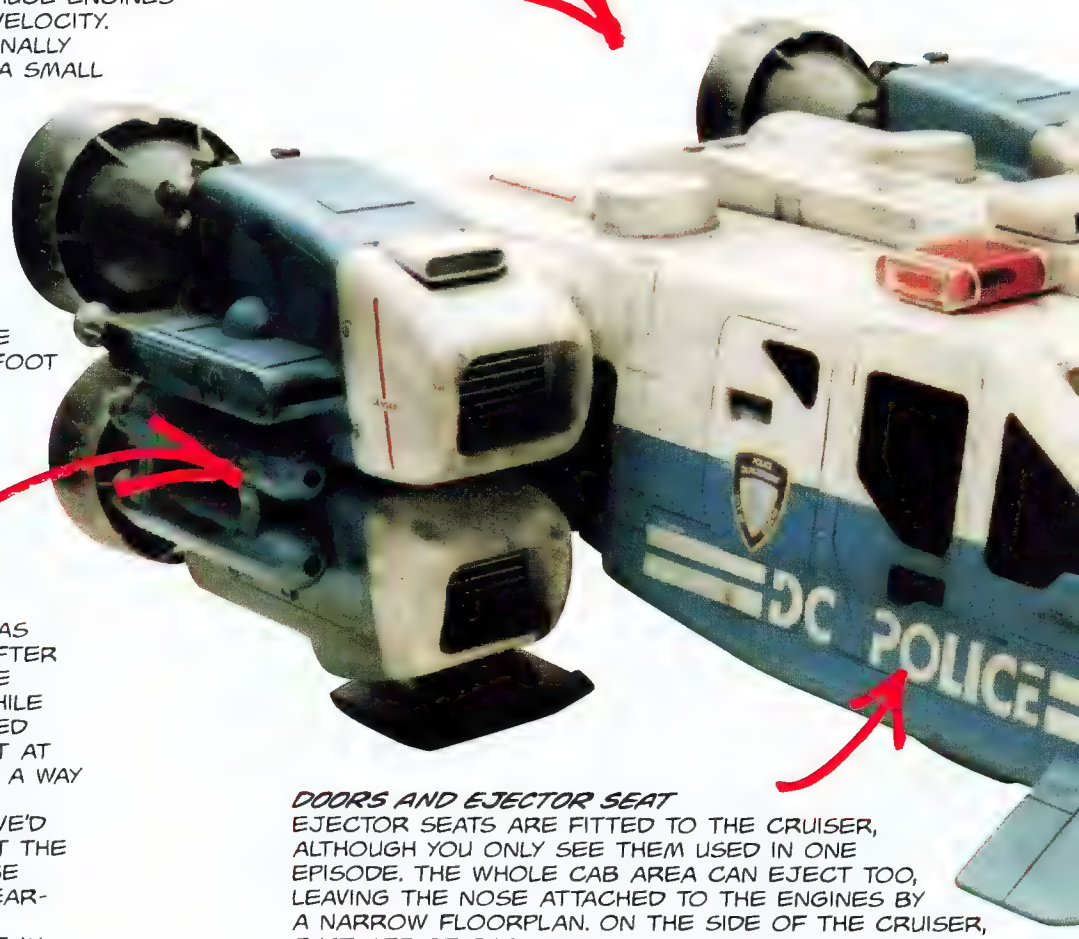


The designers had to build three sizes of model: 30", 15" and 2.5" long. In this scene, you can see one of the big models in the foreground, and a few of the 15" ones behind it. Larger gun and missile sections were built for close-ups. Different versions of the basic Cruiser were also planned – including one that could go underwater! The models were mainly built using fibreglass, perspex and brass, so that they'd withstand the rigours of filming.

HUGE REAR ENGINES

THE POLICE CRUISER IS DESIGNED TO OPERATE BOTH IN SPACE AND IN THE ATMOSPHERE, WITH THESE HUGE ENGINES USED TO ACHIEVE ESCAPE VELOCITY.

BILL PEARSON: "WE ORIGINALLY ENVISAGED THE CRAFT AS A SMALL SPACESHIP... 30 FEET OR SO LONG, WITH MOST OF THAT COMPRISING MASSIVE ENGINES. HOWEVER, WHEN THE ART DEPARTMENT CAME TO BUILD A FULL SCALE MOCK-UP, THEY REDUCED MOST OF THE DIMENSIONS BY A THIRD, MAKING THE FULL-SIZE CRUISER 20 FEET LONG. THE PROBLEM WAS, NOW A SIX FOOT ACTOR COULDN'T FIT THROUGH THE DOORS!"



MISSILES AND REAR-FIRING GUNS

ORIGINALLY, THE CRUISER WAS MEANT TO BE UNARMED... AFTER ALL, REAL POLICE CARS ARE UNARMED... BUT AFTER A WHILE THE SCRIPTWRITERS DECIDED BROGAN WAS GETTING SHOT AT SO OFTEN HE HAD TO HAVE A WAY TO FIGHT BACK...

BILL PEARSON: "LUCKILY, WE'D ANTICIPATED THE FACT THAT THE CRUISER WOULD NEED TO BE ARMED, AND BUILT SOME REAR-FIRING CANNONS, WHICH RETRACTED INTO THE ROOF. IN THE LAST EPISODE, IT WAS DECIDED THE CRUISER NEEDED FORWARD-FIRING MISSILES TOO, SO WE PRESSED THESE THINGS AT THE SIDE OF THE ENGINE INTO SERVICE AS ROCKET-LAUNCHERS. ORIGINALLY THEY WERE JUST DETAIL, AND NOT ACTUALLY MEANT TO DO ANYTHING."

DOORS AND EJECTOR SEAT

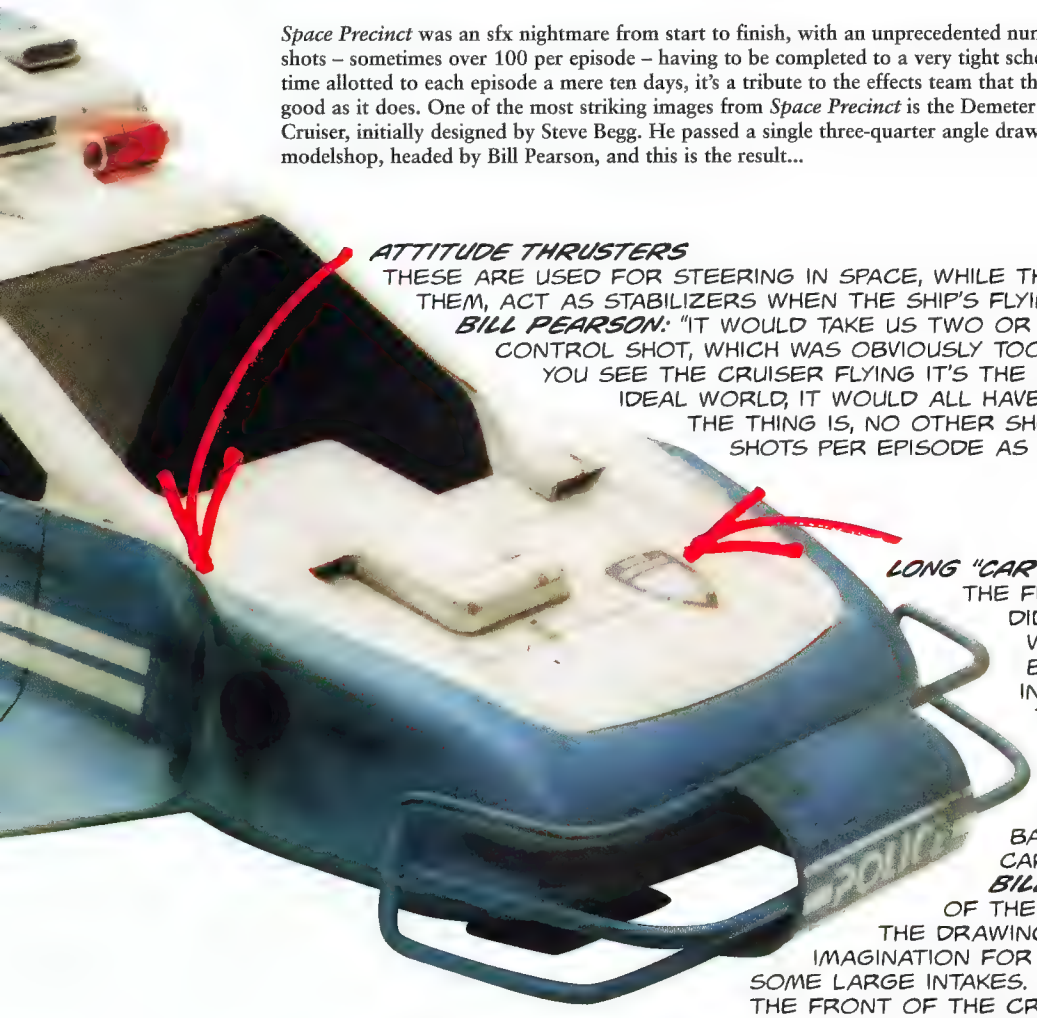
EJECTOR SEATS ARE FITTED TO THE CRUISER, ALTHOUGH YOU ONLY SEE THEM USED IN ONE EPISODE. THE WHOLE CAB AREA CAN EJECT TOO, LEAVING THE NOSE ATTACHED TO THE ENGINES BY A NARROW FLOORPLAN. ON THE SIDE OF THE CRUISER, JUST AFT OF THE DOOR, YOU CAN SEE THE CLAMPS WHERE THE PASSENGER COMPARTMENT IS FIXED ON.

BILL PEARSON: "BECAUSE THE ACTORS COULDN'T FIT THROUGH THE DOORS ON THE FULL-SCALE MOCK-UP, THEY REDESIGNED THEM AS GULL-WINGS, CUT INTO THE ROOF AS WELL AS THE SIDES OF THE SHIP, WHICH MEANT THEY HAD TO MOVE THE LIGHT BAR OUT OF THE WAY TOO. THE BIG PROBLEM WITH THIS IS IT MEANS THE FULL-SIZE CRUISER YOU SEE WITH THE ACTORS NOW LOOKS NOTHING LIKE THE MODEL!"

SPACE PRECINCT CRUISER

GERRY ANDERSON'S SPACE PRECINCT RECENTLY FINISHED ITS FIRST SEASON ON SKY, AND IS NOW BEING BROADCAST ON BBC 2. ITS STAR, HARDWARE-WISE AT LEAST, IS THIS SMALL SPACESHIP, THE DEMETER CITY POLICE CRUISER...

Space Precinct was an sfx nightmare from start to finish, with an unprecedented number of effects shots – sometimes over 100 per episode – having to be completed to a very tight schedule. With the time allotted to each episode a mere ten days, it's a tribute to the effects team that the show looks as good as it does. One of the most striking images from *Space Precinct* is the Demeter City Police Cruiser, initially designed by Steve Begg. He passed a single three-quarter angle drawing to the modelshop, headed by Bill Pearson, and this is the result...



ATTITUDE THRUSTERS
THESE ARE USED FOR STEERING IN SPACE, WHILE THE CANARD WINGS, JUST BEHIND THEM, ACT AS STABILIZERS WHEN THE SHIP'S FLYING IN A PLANET'S ATMOSPHERE.
BILL PEARSON: "IT WOULD TAKE US TWO OR THREE DAYS TO FILM A MOTION CONTROL SHOT, WHICH WAS OBVIOUSLY TOO LONG, SO MOST OF THE TIME YOU SEE THE CRUISER FLYING IT'S THE 15" MODELS ON WIRES. IN AN IDEAL WORLD, IT WOULD ALL HAVE BEEN MOTION-CONTROLLED. THE THING IS, NO OTHER SHOW HAS AS MANY EFFECTS SHOTS PER EPISODE AS WE DO."

LONG "CAR-LIKE" BONNET
THE FIRST THING THE MODELSHOP DID WAS BUILD A 1:12 SCALE VERSION OF THE CRUISER, THE BIGGEST CHANGE FROM THE INITIAL DRAWING BEING THAT THE PRODUCERS WANTED THE VESSEL TO HAVE A MORE CAR-LIKE APPEARANCE, SO A BONNET WAS ADDED. THE COLOUR SCHEME AND LIGHT BARS OF PRESENT-DAY POLICE CARS WERE ALSO USED.
BILL PEARSON: "THE UNDERSIDE OF THE CRUISER WASN'T SHOWN IN THE DRAWING, SO I HAD TO USE MY IMAGINATION FOR THAT. IN THE END, I ADDED SOME LARGE INTAKES. WITH THE BONNET, I THOUGHT THE FRONT OF THE CRUISER WAS STARTING TO RESEMBLE A DUCK'S BILL... NOT VERY MACHO REALLY... SO I ADDED SOME BULL BARS TO HOPEFULLY HARDEN UP THE LOOK!"

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The SFX Review Guide is designed to direct you to the very best in films, books, videos, comics, TV shows and other groovy stuff released this month...

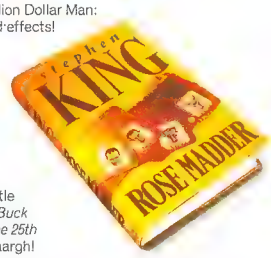
REVIEWS

HR Giger's latest alien shows up in Species, plus King's Rose Madder, and more...

He might be voiced by Mel Blanc, but he's still crap...

This month's comparative ratings scale – based on TV and movie artificial intelligences – has been supplied by Richard Dominic Evans of Manchester. Now, with its help, you've got no excuse for not understanding what SFX's easy-to-understand-anyway rating system is all about...

- RoboCop: Unbeatable.
- Data from *ST: TNG:* Fascinating.
- T-1000 from *Terminator 2:* Lethal!
- The Positronic Man by Asimov. Well thought out.
- HAL 9000 from *2001:* Cold and logical.
- The Borg from *ST: TNG:* Resistance is, indeed, futile.
- Eve 8 from *Eve of Destruction:* For "sensitive" types.
- Gort from *The Day the Earth Stood Still:* Strong.
- The Six Million Dollar Man: What sound effects!
- Mandroid: Yawn.
- Universal Soldier: Snore.
- That irritating little robot from *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century:* Aaargh!



PAGE 76
Species, the unexpected SF/horror hit of the Summer in the US, earns a UK release at last – but is it any good? Plus borderline SF/thriller *The Net*, the *Mortal Kombat* movie and The Month in Film...

PAGE 80
Channel 4's Sci-Fi Weekend is tested, and found wanting. Plus *Dead at 21*, now on Bravo, *Fantomcat*, *The Maxx*, and The Month in TV...

PAGE 84
Christopher Lambert in *Fortress* to buy, plus the original *Tomorrow People* (at last!), *Space Precinct*, the first three volumes of *RoboCop: The Series*, and yer normal, everyday instalments of *Babylon 5*, *Doctor Who*, and the like.

PAGE 92
John Clute's *Science Fiction: The Illustrated Encyclopedia* arrives at last, plus Robert Rankin's *The Garden of Unearthly Delights*, Brian Aldiss' *The Secret of this Book* and more...

PAGE 100
A gorgeous new limited edition *Time Machine* model (it'll cost ya), plus *The Empire Strikes Back* "action scenes," *Batman Forever* kits, and more.

PAGE 102
Two heavyweight reference works weigh in, including the rather massive – though far from perfect – *Star Trek Omnipedia* on CD-ROM.

PAGE 104
Morrison, Millar and Yeowell's *Skrull Kill Krew* brings hip, Vertigo-esque street characters to the Marvel Universe – while Alan Moore gets stuck into *WildC.A.T.S.*, and *The X-Files* comics continue to break sales records everywhere...

PAGE 106
More of the usual hard to pigeon-hole bits 'n' bobs, including *Judge Dredd* on both CD and trading cards, Radio 4's latest SF-orientated effort, and a particularly delightful fantasy calendar...

FILM Reviews

"While *Species* begs comparison with *Alien*, it's nowhere near as good. It's not as exciting or scary, and the characters aren't as strong."

SPECIES

HR Giger returns to the world of movie monsters, with a voluptuous female alien trapped on Earth...

The female alien in all her glory – impressive, yes, but not particularly scary. The film is far more effective when it's concentrating on the human Sil...

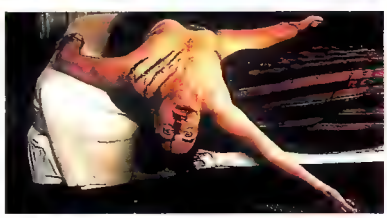
...as played by the model Natasha Henstridge, who manages to be both beautiful and otherworldly.

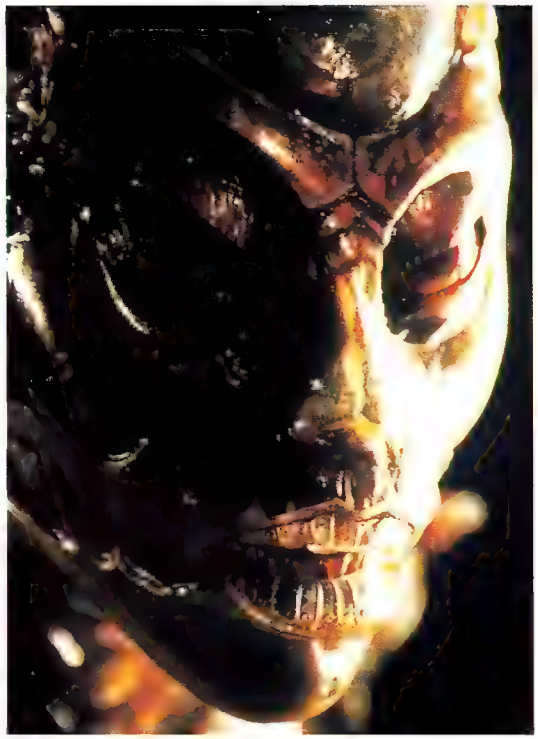
Studio: **UIP/MGM**
Director: **Roger Donaldson**
Starring: **Ben Kingsley, Michael Madsen, Alfred Molina, Forest Whitaker**
Cert: **18**
Running time: **108 mins**
Release: **Now showing**

Text: **Matt Bielby**

The idea is a good one... Mankind's been sending signals out into space for decades now, telling anyone who cares to listen roughly what we're like and where we live. So what would happen if someone answered?

Like I say, it's a great idea, and the film that springs from it has its moments – and, oddly enough, they're not the special effect scenes either. Right from the start, nasty stuff keeps happening to people – backs are broken, spines ripped out, *Alien*-like jaws smash through skulls, breasts sprout tentacles – but it all seems rather overdone.





From *Aliens*-esque lab scenes (top) to gruesome shocks (above) to the monster itself, the influence is clear...

You can't help thinking that events would benefit from a bit more tension – despite the nastiness, there are few jump-out-of-your-seat scares – and perhaps a little of the less fancy make-up.

The set-up goes something like this (and don't worry if you miss it the first time round – Michael Madsen spells it out later for the hard of thinking): Message comes from space, telling humans how to make a super-fuel that'll save the environment. Looks like whoever sent it must be chummy then. Second message comes, revealing how to mix human DNA with a new sequence to create something new – and presumably alien. Top secret US government bureau can't help giving it a shot, and a normal human girl is born – the only weird thing about her being that she's growing up *fast*... Then she does something genuinely alien (goodness knows what they were expecting) and they decide to kill her off. She has other ideas...

The first half of the film, then, is a bit like a science fiction version of *The Fugitive*, and works pretty well as such. The big difference here, of course, is that instead of Harrison Ford on the run it's a 12 year old alien girl – soon to be 21, thanks to an accelerated growth rate – and you get a heavyweight cast of government experts instead of Tommy Lee Jones. A hammy, American-accented Ben Kingsley is their leader, Michael Madsen the cuddly hitman muscle, Forest Whitaker the cuddlier, rather laughable, empath, and Alfred Molina the token Brit. Half the time, we ride with this bickering lot, half the time we're with "Sil," the alien girl, as she carves her half-innocent, half-murderous path to LA...

Despite the high class of before-the-camera talent, one of the things that lets *Species* down is the interaction between the monster-chasers – antagonism is half-heartedly generated between Kingsley and Madsen, and Madsen's shagfest with the one female member of the hunting party (Marg Helgenberger) seems unconvincing and clichéd.

All this fairly dubious hokum would be much more acceptible if our heroes were at least given something intelligent to say. Conclusions are jumped to willy-nilly ("Maybe he was in some way physically imperfect," suggests one scientist when they find one of Sil's victims. "Yes, he was a naemophiliac. Here're his needles and insulin," responds another, holding it all up), and the dialogue is often terribly hokey. When Helgenberger eventually comes up with something like, "So she's half human, half something else. I wonder, which side is the predator?" it's completely in keeping with the tone of the rest of the film.

Perhaps worst of all is Forest Whitaker, who's forever wandering around mouthing a sympathetic "she's lonely, she's scared..." as Sil rips yet another passer-by's head off. His utterances get more laughable as the film goes on. Honestly, you begin to wonder how many of the actors are taking any of it seriously...

Thankfully, there is a saving grace on the acting front, and bizarrely – considering the heavyweight acting talent on display here – it comes in the form of the adult Sil, played by newcomer Natasha Henstridge, here in her first acting role. Sure, she's good looking, and, sure, it helps that she spends much of her time partially unclad – but it's to her credit that she remains likeable throughout. And that despite the fact she hardly gets anything to say.

Sil leaves a long, bloody trail of bodies in her wake...

Secret agent Michael Madsen (top) joins frantic boffin Ben Kingsley (above) in the race to track Sil down.

As she sleeps, her dreams of an alien planet soon go into overdrive...

Now I'm not saying she's quite in this league just yet, but Henstridge as Sil displays some of the appeal Daryl Hannah had in *Splash*. Of course, unlike the mermaid Madigan, Sil kills people – but it's something I found strangely easy to forgive her for. Despite the fact she's bumping people off, you can't help root for the alien almost all the way – it's only at the very end, with her reduced to that over-familiar Giger monster form, that sympathy really flips to the monster-chasers.

Of course, you can't talk about *Species* without making comparisons with Ridley Scott's *Alien*. But while *Species* is kinda fun, it's nowhere near as good. It's not as exciting or scary, and the main characters aren't as strong. The real trouble, though, is that it's all too similar. One whole sequence is a direct rip-off from the "face-huggers loose in the lab" bit from *Aliens*, for instance.

The sad fact is, Giger's designs haven't moved on much since *Alien*. In fact, if anything, they seem to have gone backwards. Sil is much closer to his pre-*Alien* paintings of buxom, ridiculous-looking alien women than anything I can think of. Which means the alien version of Sil somehow comes across as both silly and a Giger knock-off, despite some fine model work. It doesn't help that she's shown much more clearly than the Alien too – by the end, she's not scary at all, her final, computer-generated form more reminiscent of a Ray Harryhausen creature than anything...

Species is a flawed ride then – predictable, often hokey, and sadly unscary, particularly at the climax – but it has its strengths, chiefly a nice chase build-up, and an appealing heroine. Some of the gruesome make-up effects early on before Sil reveals her true form – are nicely shocking too.

Oh, and by the way, the plot doesn't make sense. At one point, the logic seems to be that the only way to cover the vast distances of space is to send messages, not physical representatives, and in the next it's suggested that the aliens wanted to kill humanity off before we as a race physically spread to the stars. But then this sort of inconsistency seems to be the case with almost every film we review, doesn't it?

MORTAL KOMBAT

Studio: **First Independent**
Director: **Paul Anderson**
Starring: **Christopher Lambert, Robin Shou, Linden Ashby, Talisa Soto**
Cert: **TBA**
Running time: **100 mins**
Release: **20 October** (13 October in Scotland)

Text: **Stuart Campbell**

What's *Give us a Clue* going to be like in the future? I myself imagine three-hour epics, with an arthritic (but charismatic) Lionel Blair spending the whole of part one miming "It's a film... And a book... And a game... And a TV series..." and so on, in slow motion, forever. But that's not quite the point, is it?

The point is: Is *Mortal Kombat* the movie a stupid idea, or what? Well, yes and no. It *is* a stupid idea – turning a video game into a movie – and, as *Street Fighter* proved, can result in disastrously poor entertainment if it's handled the wrong way. And the wrong way to handle a film of a video game is to try to make it *work* as a film. The *right* way, and the way *Mortal Kombat* handles things, is to make it simply a video game on celluloid. Thus, *Mortal Kombat* the movie has, in fact, even *less* of a plot than *Mortal Kombat* the game. What it *does* have (and, don't worry, I'll be easing up on these italics pretty soon) is the coin-op's atmosphere, but better lit.

I'll explain. *Mortal Kombat* the movie is basically an excuse for lots (and lots) of fights. What few plot links there are are usually shoddily constructed, and often dispensed with altogether – characters regularly fight each other simply because it seemed a good idea at the time. The battles themselves, however, are pretty nifty – the combatants identifiably use many of their arcade moves, battle in the arcade settings, and say the things they say in the original game. Everything moves at high speed, and the camera often pans back at a right angle, so the Kombatants appear to face each other on an effectively 2D background – it actually looks and feels like watching the coin-op.

Whether that's a good thing or not is a moot point – after all, you can go and watch the coin-op for free. Or even play it for 50p. But the movie is (very slightly) better acted, and makes for an entertaining enough hour-and-a-half or so if you go in unburdened by high expectations.

Still, there are a few anomalies. It's a lot less gory than the game, for a start – even when people die by falling on to giant serrated spikes, there's no blood to be seen at all. But if the makers are aiming for a kiddy-friendly certification (yet to be decided at the time of going to press), then the spine-crushing sequence at the very beginning seems a bit out of place – it made me wince, that's for sure.. Some major characters are used very flippantly too (Kano, in particular, is gradually built up for half the film, then gets killed in a very off-hand manner). And the "funny" stuff (Christopher Lambert plays Rayden the Thunder God almost entirely as comic relief) doesn't sit well with the overall feel of the thing either.

Still, *Mortal Kombat* is a lot better than it could have been, and it's got a decent enough ending. And, recently, that's about as much as I expect from any movie... 😐

The review was almost done, but for a few captions...

Rayden gets close to cute Princess Kitana. This scene occurs at no point during the actual film, incidentally.

"FINISH THEM!" barked Matt, in a take-no-prisoners kind of voice.

THE NET

Ménage-à-trois: Jack, Angela – and a Netjacked PowerBook.

Jack Devlin (Jeremy Northam) slaps on the gooey charm.

Studio: **Columbia**
Director: **Irwin Winkler**
Starring: **Sandra Bullock, Jeremy Northam, Dennis Miller, Diane Baker**
Cert: **TBA**
Running time: **112 mins**
Release: **6 October**

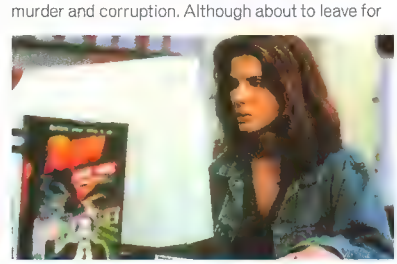
Text: **Nigel Floyd**

Despite its topical title, *The Net* is a semi-futuristic technothriller with a script that harks back to the old days of Western Union, when everything was telegraphed in advance. Indeed, even the title seems like an opportunistic afterthought, designed to cash in on the current interest in the Internet.

Unfortunately, it might just as well refer to the many holes in the film's flimsy plot. The only thing that can save this from box-office disaster is the fact that, following the success of *Speed* and *While You Were Sleeping,* babe-next-door Sandra Bullock is currently flavour of the moment.

Freelance computer analyst Angela Bennett (Sandra Bullock) is a friendless nerd who, when she's not removing viruses from the systems of large companies or debugging computer games, slobs around her San Francisco apartment in baggy check-shirts ordering fast food on Pizza Net and "chatting" on-line to other socially inept saddoes. A brief pause for a reality check here: Just as in *While You Were Sleeping,* Bullock is cast as a lonely working woman who can't find a boyfriend and, in this instance, has to resort to having sex with her married shrink. Are there any straight males in the audience who believe this? I don't think so.

Anyway, shortly after Under-Secretary of Defence Michae. Bergstrom blows his brains out and is revealed to have been HIV positive, Angela inadvertently gets caught up in a World Wide Web of murder and corruption. Although about to leave for her first holiday in years, she agrees to meet her colleague Dale Hessman (Ray McKinnon), who's flying to San Francisco to show her a new virus he's found in a computer game called *Mozart's Ghost;* a mysterious Pi symbol which seems to provide access to top secret information. However, neither the fact that Dale's self-piloted plane subsequently smacks into the side of a building nor a complete computer melt-down at LAX airport, alert Angela to the fact something mighty weird is going on.



The feisty Angela Bennett (Sandra Bullock) is the geek girl, apparently. You could have fooled us...

Pretty soon, she's running herself on an idyllic Mexican beach, albeit with her trusty Apple PowerBook and a copy of the virus-infected disk by her side. Then she meets a tall, dark, handsome Englishman, Jack Devlin (Jeremy Northam), who's charming, shares her passion for computers, and can quote lines from her favourite film, *Breakfast at Tiffany's.* This immediately alerts every sentient being to the fact that Jack is either: (a) married, (b) gay, or (c) working for the bad guys. Angela, of course, doesn't twig at all...

As a result, she ends up fleeing from Jack, trying to recover an identity that has been erased through alteration of her computer records, and dodging bullets on spinning carousels. Worst of all, Angela spends only about ten minutes film time *in toto* on-line. To be fair, the handling of the computer technology is better than we've come to expect, but even this is blunted by the surrounding dullness.

Just as Annie Lennox's theme song, a cover version of *A Whiter Shade of Pale,* is a faint Xerox of Procul Harum's original, so director/producer/co-scripter Irwin Winkler's photocopy of a Hitchcock thriller lacks the sharp wit and cinematic technique of the master, and hence fails to generate any genuine excitement. It's the sort of film we weren't sure we should cover in SFX – it got in by the skin of its teeth – and now we're not even sure we should've bothered... 😐

Ron Hughes

The month in FILM

THE THREE BIGGIES STILL FILLING CINEMAS AND MULTIPLEXES ACROSS THE COUNTRY, PLUS WHAT'S COMING OUT IN OCTOBER, AND THE LATEST TOP TEN.

Still playing

APOLLO 13

Universal

Director: **Ron Howard**
Starring: **Tom Hanks, Bill Paxton, Kevin Bacon, Gary Sinese, Ed Harris**
Cert: **PG**
Running time: **140 mins**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

Hanks and crew discover that life in space *isn't* like a box of chocs.

NASA's Apollo 13 blasted off at 13.13 hours on 11 April 1970, and on 13 April came the message: "Houston, we have a problem." *Apollo 13* the movie tells a true story, one where the ending is a matter of historical record, but is no less gripping when re-enacted.

Hanks, Bacon and Paxton are the three astronauts struggling to survive in a tiny, primitive space capsule with inadequate supplies of heat, air and power. Sinise is their colleague, dropped from the mission two days before blast-off for medical reasons, running endless ground-based simulations to try and find a way out. However, the stand-out among an excellent cast is Ed Harris, as the Houston ground controller: "We've never lost an American in space yet, and we're not going to lose the first one on my watch!"

This is simply the best movie of the year, packed with tension, tight characterisation, stunning effects, historical interest and a dash of black humour.

But do our luckless heroes get back to Earth safely at the end? Well, what do you think?

A

A member of the Cyclops cult from *The City of Lost Children*. Naturally.

THE CITY OF LOST CHILDREN

Lumiere/Le Studio Canal+/France 3 Cinema

Director: **Jean-Pierre Jeunet, Marc Caro**
Starring: **Ron Perlman, Daniel Emilfork**
Cert: **15**
Running time: **112 mins**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

Don't be put off by the fact that this movie is a) French or b) arty. *La Cité des Enfants Perdu* is a funny, charming and beautifully designed 'steampunk' fairy tale. Ron Perlman *(Beauty & The Beast, Cronos)* is One, a circus strongman who goes in search of his little brother after he's been kidnapped by the sinister Cyclops cult.

The Cyclops are taking small children so that Krank (Emil Danilfork) - a mad scientist living on a disused oil-rig with his midget mother, brain-in-a-tank uncle and half a dozen cloned brothers (all brilliantly and cleverly played by Dominique Pinon) – can extract their dreams for himself.

Strongman One soon teams up with Miette, a young girl belonging to a gang of street urchins, led by a Fagin-like pair of Siamese twin sisters, and then, er, lots of odd and rather surreal things happen.

From the team who brought you the ace *Delicatessen*, this is a piece of pure cinematic magic.

A

A small group of lost children. In a city. Yesterday.

WATERWORLD

Universal

Director: **Kevin Reynolds**
Starring: **Kevin Costner, Dennis Hopper, Jeanne Tripplehorn**
Cert: **12**
Running time: **135 mins**
Text: **Matt Bielby**

It cost nearly $200 million, and you can certainly see where the money went. Indeed, watching it, I couldn't help thinking, "That must have been a nightmare to film," every ten minutes or so. It rather knackers the suspension of disbelief, sadly.

That said, as a slam-bang actioner, *Waterworld* is very impressive. The production design, particularly the main atoll set, is gobsmacking, not so much for its seen-it-all-before post-Apocalyptic design as its sheer scale. And certain action scenes will knock your socks off. Costner is surprisingly unlikeable as the mutated Clint Eastwood-type hero, but at least he has a depth to him most of this Summer's other action heroes don't even try for – so he can walk away from the film head held reasonably high.

Costner ponders merging liquid assets with *seaQuest DSV*.

However, there are problems... In the middle things get awfully dull, for instance, and there are several plot holes you could quite happily sail the QE2 through – sideways. Luckily, the action almost makes up for it.

B

Coming soon

Haunted **Oct 27**
Fluke may have gone straight to video, but another Herbert novel makes it to the UK big screen with the understated *Haunted*

Johnny Mnemonic **Nov 10**
The cyberexperience that failed to set America alight.

Candyman 2: Farewell To The Flesh **Nov 17**
Don't say "Candyman" five times in front of the mirror– he might return for another sequel

Virtuosity **Nov 17**
Denzil Washington in a techno-thriller, based around the Internet!

Goldeneye **Nov 22**
Another Bond film with the best bits before the titles? Hope not

SF Movie Box Office

Floating to the Top...

A big nah-nah-nah-nah-nah to all those who prophesied a watery grave for Kevin Costner's aquatic opus – it's raked in over $47 million over the past four weeks! New entries on the SFX Worldwide SF (and related movie) Box Office Chart include Denzel Washington-starring VR tale ***Virtuosity***, and high-tech thriller ***The Net*** (reviewed on page 78), with Sandra Bullock. ***Batman Forever*** is still doing well, but wither ***Judge Dredd?*** Well, it's showing up *below* the ***Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers*** – ho, ho, ho! Meanwhile, that saccharine offering ***Casper*** is still performing well too.

The SFX Exclusive Worldwide Top Ten SF Films

1 **Waterworld** (US) Universal
2 **Apollo 13** (US) Universal
3 **Batman Forever** (US) Warner Brothers
4 **Casper** (US) Paramount
5 **The Net** (US) Columbia
6 **Species** (US) MGM/UA
7 **Virtuosity** (US) Paramount
8 **The Indian in the Cupboard** (US) Paramount
9 **Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers** (US) Fox
10 **Judge Dredd** (US) Buena Vista

"A classic piece of TV scheduling saw the first episode of season two of *The X-Files* on BBC 2 at the same time. Well, which one would you watch?"

SCI-FI WEEKEND

For those not distracted by Worldcon, Channel 4 served up an alternative. A pity, then, that it was a halfbaked mix of old SF films and loony-tunes UFO stuff...

Outland **was typical of the less-than-engaging nature of Sci-Fi Weekend.**

Shown on: **Channel 4**
Dates: **26-28 August**
Text: **Hillary Stephen**

For hardcore SF fans not otherwise engaged in Glasgow, and the millions who're "into SF but not enough to attend a convention", Channel 4 made a brave attempt to provide a worthwhile alternative – the much hyped "Sci-Fi Weekend". Running over three days, including the August Bank Holiday, it promised a mix of films, classic TV shows and, potentially most interestingly, original programming covering all aspects of the field. Right from the start, however, it was clear this was going to be a very mixed bag indeed...

The first programme, *Beam Me Up, Scotty!* (Sat, 8.30pm), began the weekend on a bum note. A sort of "Bluffer's guide to SF and Worldcon", it failed to be either informative or innovative, despite commentary from *Red Dwarf*'s Craig Charles and some interesting anecdotes from Terry Pratchett, Iain Banks and other SF literati. Sadly, it set the tone for much of what was to come.

As the weekend progressed, other programmes failed to engage the attention. *In Advance of the Landing* (Sat, 9.20pm) was another showcase for American loony-tunes to tell their stories of alleged alien abductions, and began a strand of shows more to do with ufology than the interests of most SF fans. *The Real X-Files* (Sun, 9.00pm), for instance, was concerned with the American military and its involvement with psychic spying, while *Secret History: The Roswell Incident* (Mon, 9.00pm) covered yet another angle on alien landings. A classic piece of TV scheduling saw the

Yes, it's that face again! Samuel Delaney added some weight to Channel 4's Sci-Fi Weekend, but the results still failed to satisfy.

first episode of season two of *The X-Files* on BBC 2 at the same time. Well, which one did you watch?

The last programme of the weekend, *The Mothership Connection* (Mon, 11.55pm), explored black culture's connections to science fiction, and had some potential – though it did come across as a painfully obvious attempt to be trendy and hip. Its big problem was that of the entire weekend – the material was of limited scope, and not directly enough related to science fiction. Add to this some patronising presentation throughout – the "Cadbury's Smash"-style alien announcer; the intriguing-but-not-absorbing 60 second *Faster Than Light News* bulletins nicked from the Sci-Fi Channel – and it's little wonder most SF fans were seriously disappointed by the whole weekend.

Of course, there were reasons to keep on watching, the most obvious being the number of great movies shown over the three days. Classics such as *THX1138*, *I Married a Monster from Outer Space*, *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, and *Soylent Green* were very welcome, and for those I thank Channel 4. But oh dear, if only they'd researched the rest of it better. What the weekend definitely needed was a more informed programme about Worldcon and what it means to SF fans, plus some proper interviews with SF authors/film-makers, and some classic TV. (That the only TVSF which C4 seem to have the rights to is *Mork & Mindy* and *Babylon 5* is a sad state of affairs indeed.)

In fact the best thing about the weekend was the ident sequence of the 4-shaped spaceship. If only the same imagination had gone into the actual programming. All in all, then, the Sci-Fi Weekend was a bit of a half-hearted attempt. It's great that Channel 4 made the effort at all, but tragic that the end of term report has to be the classic "could do better." **C-**

Terry Pratchett, one of the most visible faces at Intersection, appeared on *Beam Me Up, Scotty!*

THE MAXX

Production company: **Rough Draft Studios, Inc/ MTV Networks**
Producer: **Claudia Katz**
Created by: **Sam Kieth**
Voices: **Michael Haley, Glynnis Talken, Tony Fucile**
Showing on: **MTV, Mondays at 10pm**
Text: **Matt Bielby**

Now this is a weird one. *The Maxx* is a cartoon series airing on MTV in its 'Oddities' slot, based – very accurately as far as I can tell – on the Image comic book created by Sam Kieth.

Now I've never actually read *The Maxx*, but Kieth is an interesting artist, with a pleasantly sketchy, cartoon style, not unlike a cleaned-up version of some '70s underground comix artist. And it's a look that's transferred remarkably well to the small screen.

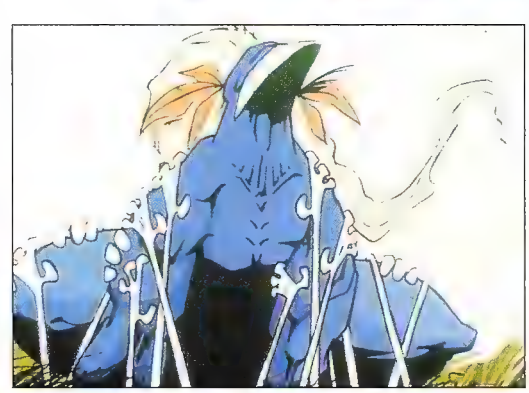
Making head or tale of the plot of *The Maxx* is a bit of a problem, though – it's much more convoluted than you'd expect, and I've missed a number of episodes, which doesn't help – but it goes something like this... *The Maxx* is a purple superhero/monster crossbreed, with massive teeth, big spikes on his hands, gigantic feet, and a gruff voice. In the real world he lives, homeless, in a cardboard box in an alleyway, and moons – *Beauty and the Beast*-style – over pretty Julie Winters, a "freelance social worker." She's a fun character, with a nice line in put-downs – and an appalling attitude, for a social worker at any rate (she seems to think rape victims should "stop whining"!) There's also a smarmy, English-voiced serial killer-cum-magician geezer, who kidnaps her at one point, snarls nastily, and sends lots of little monsters to get The Maxx.

The thing is, this "real world" stuff is only half the story. It seems The Maxx keeps shifting, against his will, into a parallel world – which he takes to be Australia, though it seems pretty clear he's mistaken – where he's the powerful protector of another incarnation of Julie, this one being the "queen of the leopard women." The Maxx and other characters keep flipping between the two, meaning that, for the audience, working out what's actually going on can take some doing.

What really makes the show fun is its sense of humour – some of the dialogue is great, and there are plenty of nice visual jokes, many of them ultra-gross – while the animation, which combines spot-on Kieth lookalike hand-drawn stuff with CGI sequences, is brilliantly effective. Even better is the interesting, comic book influenced way things are presented – fights are occasionally *Batman*-like (you know, with "Pow!" and "Smash!" and things written on the screen), and you'll often get a sort of inset panel effect, where the same scene is shown from two angles, one image much smaller than the other, at the same time – and with both images animated. It reproduces the look and feel of an actual comic page very nicely indeed. This is the sort of cartoon where every time you hit freeze frame you get a still picture you'd like to peel from your TV screen and stick to the wall.

All in all, then, while it's flawed – despite his outrageous look, our hero himself seems a fairly dull character – *The Maxx* ends up as a largely successful experiment, and one I'd like to see more of. It certainly deserves a wider audience in this country than it'll probably get through its current MTV slot... **B**

"That's bogus," smiled the old woman. "My Billy does The Maxx..."



Sam Kieth's artwork is carried from comic page to the small screen very effectively – the sketchy style is reminiscent of '70s comic strips.

© Rian Hughes

The month in TV

THIS MONTH'S RELEASES SQUARELY TARGET THE YOUNGER FANTASY AND SF FAN, WITH A POTENTIAL SUCCESSOR TO COSGROVE HALL'S DANGERMOUSE, PLUS AN MTV-INDEBTED PIECE OF SCI-FI FLUFF.

FANTOMCAT

Production Company: **Cosgrove Hall Films**
Starring: **Robert Powell, Lorelei King**
Showing: **ITV, Thursdays, 4.15pm**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

Previewed as far back as SFX2, this is the latest offering from the people who brought us such cult hits as *Dangermouse*, *Duckula* and *Avenger Penguins*. Can they manage it again?

Fantomcat is a dashing 17th century aristocrat, a sort of one-cat-Three-Muskateers, who battled the evil Baron Von Skelter until he was magically entrapped in a painting. Over 300 years later he is reanimated, only to find himself in 21st century Metro City, befriended by private detective Tabby "Tabbs" Wildcat and her colleagues Lindbergh the pigeon and Macduff the mouse.

Metro City is riddled with crime and corruption, most of it controlled by Marmagora, a black widow spider. Her latest consort is a bluebottle called Vile but, black widows being what they are, his position is rather perilous. Other villains include a samurai scorpion, a "minotiger", and Fantomcat's nemesis, Von Skelter.

Robert Powell voices the main character as a mixture of his Richard Hannay and Victor Frankenstein voices, while all the female voices emanate from the ubiquitous and talented Lorelei King (also to be heard on Radio 1FM in the *Judge Dredd* series), with Jimmy Hibbert as Vile and Lindbergh, and Rob Rackstraw providing Macduff's scouse accent.

The mood is a lot darker than previous CH shows, but the comic touch is still there, and the *Adam Adamant*-style set up allows for an interesting culture clash between the dashing and cultured Fantomcat and the sassy and streetwise Tabbs. Although the animation in some ways looks simpler than in *Avenger Penguins*, the use of the Animo computer system allows for some innovative and well-used effects.

Almost inevitably, then, this is another fun series from Cosgrove Hall. As with *Dangermouse* et al, it's ostensibly aimed at children, but adults will enjoy it too.

B

Robert Powell provides the voice for Fantomcat. Well, it's a definite step up from appearing in *The Detectives* with Jasper Carrott...

DEAD AT 21

QWERTY, Inc

Starring: **Jack Noseworthy, Lisa Dean Ryan, Whip Hubley**
Showing: **Wednesdays, 9.30pm, Bravo**
Text: **Dave Golder**

You can tell this started life on MT – it's a bit like watching a half hour Bon Jovi promo vid. Long-haired teenagers in hooded sweatshirts party on down in slow motion as the stalking villain is silhouetted against the static of a massive wall of video screens, all shot in super-swoop-o-vision™, and accompanied by a continually pounding rock soundtrack.

It's good to know that in the future world of *Dead at 21* heroes still have big choppers...

Jack Noseworthy stars as the perfectly coiffured Ed, a *Bill & Ted*-esque chap who discovers that he's part of a secret government experiment, one where microchips were placed in the heads of babies in the hope of activating the nine-tenths of the brain humans don't normally use. The government, it seems, intended to create a new race of super-intelligent kids; judging by Ed, they failed.

Problem one is that the chips cause burn out; when the kids reach 21 they drop dead from mental exhaustion. Ed learns all this from a gun-toting lunatic and fellow "neuro-cybernaut" called Dan, who gate crashes his 20th birthday party. Dan is promptly gunned down by a man claiming to be from the Department of Justice, so Ed makes a quick exit, joined by some girl he met about two minutes beforehand (Ryan) – seemingly for no better reason than to maintain the interest of the male audience members.

Needless to say, the thing develops into a kind of hi-tech *Fugitive* – albeit a relentlessly juvenile one. Despite the trendy aesthetics, it comes across more like an extremely expensive BBC kids' drama series than anything – in the slot Bravo's giving it you'd expect a show to be aimed at twenty-somethings, but really this is much more likely to appeal to the 12-14 year olds. And fairly slow ones at that – the plot in each half hour drama is minimal, with the characters defined more by their look than their dialogue, and the frenetic pace allowing little time for things like motivation.

Despite all this, however, *Dead at 21* is watchable enough. The dream sequences Ed experiences as the chip starts to warp his mind are effectively creepy, and the sub-*Batman Forever* camerawork at least makes it appealing eye-fodder. But you start to worry about MTV viewers, you really do...

B-

Coming soon

Nowhere Man
Sky One **3 Oct**
A surprise US hit, this is kind of like *The Prisoner*-meets-*The Fugitive*.

Earth 2
Sky One **4 Oct**
Cancelled US *Lost in Space* thing.

VR.5
Sky One **21 Oct**
Cancelled US cyberpunk thing.

Star Trek: Voyager
Sky One **22 Oct**
The best "new" *Trek* pilot yet ("The Cage" is still the best), but can the series maintain the standards?

Mission Impossible
Channel 4 **22 Oct**
Remind yourself of the original before you see the movie next year.

Karaoke/Cold Lazarus
BBC 1/Channel 4 **Early '96**
Dennis Potter's last plays are being co-produced by the BBC and C4, and will air on both channels. They're SF, about an author whose head is kept alive after he dies.

Space: Above and Beyond
Sky One **Jan**
Yes, it's that one, from the ex-*X-Files* producers. The one with the stunning-looking CGI effects. The one we slagged after only seeing the rough cut. Oops.

SF TV Top Ten

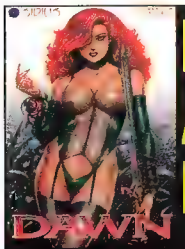
Summer slump

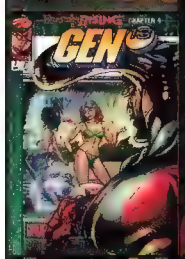
The best August proved to be TV's silly season, with ***The Roswell Incident*** proving a major draw for viewers into all things weird, and ***The X-Files*** making a triumphant return in the top slot.

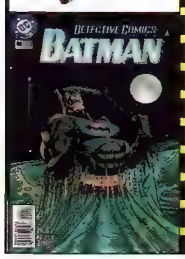
At a time when there's next to no decent SF on terrestrial TV, C4's **Sci-Fi Weekend** nabbed a few more places than might otherwise have been expected. Hell, it's a sorry state of affairs when ***Time Trax*** can get in at number eight...

The SFXclusive UK Top Ten TV Programmes

1. **The X-Files** (BBC 2)
2. **The Roswell Incident** (C4)
3. **Star Trek: TNG** (BBC 2)
4. **Buck Rogers in the 25th Century** (BBC 2)
5. **The Mothership Connection** (C4)
6. **Beam Me Up, Scotty!** (C4)
7. **Knight Rider** (ITV)
8. **Time Trax** (ITV)
9. **The X-Files** (Sky One)
10. **Star Trek: DS9** (Sky One)







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"'The Slaves of Jedikiah,' it has to be said, bears all the hallmarks of a production made by people who simply didn't have a clue about, or interest in, science fiction."

THE TOMORROW PEOPLE: THE SLAVES OF JEDIKIAH

Wobbly scenery and ham-acting make The Tomorrow People yesterday's men...

Distributor: **Video Gems**
Director: **Paul Bernard**
Starring: **Sammie Winmill, Nicholas Young, Peter Vaughan-Clarke, Stephen Salmon**
Cert: **PG**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **130 mins**
Price: **£10.99 each**

Text: **Dave Golder**

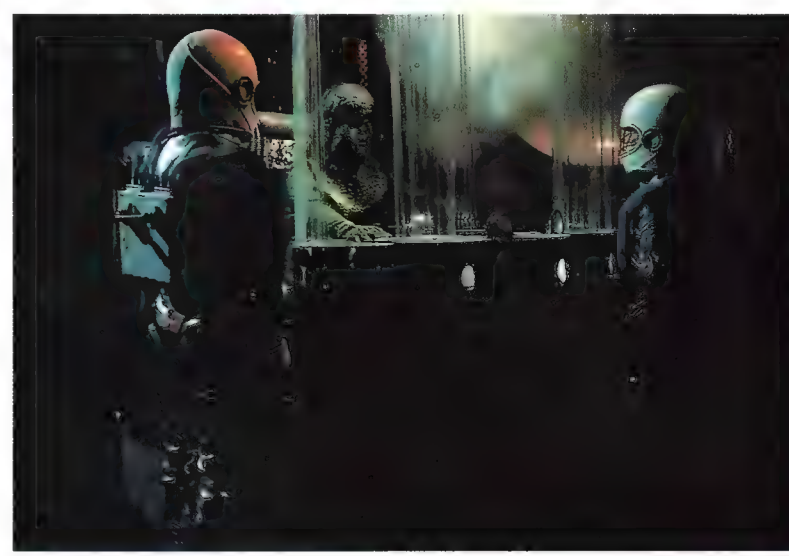
And so, finally, *Doctor Who*'s ITV-produced illegitimate half-brother from the '70s makes it to video. The parallels between the two shows are obvious – and we're not just talking wobbly sets and bad CSO gone wild.

The Tomorrow People was ITV's unashamed answer to the BBC's (then) increasingly popular *Who*. If Auntie could get audiences in excess of ten million with cheapo sci-fi, it was reasonable to assume the commercial channel could pull off the same trick. And it did – for a while, at least. Okay, so *The Tomorrow People* never quite entered the collective psyche in the same way (everyone knows K9 is a robot dog, but how many can remember TIM was a computer?), but any series which lasts eight seasons can hardly be called a failure.

Conceived as a series of multi-episode stories (just like *Who*), *The Tomorrow People* was the brainchild of writer/producer Roger Price, who even called in veteran *Who* director Paul ("Day of the Daleks"/"The Time Monster") Bernard to direct this 1973 debut story. After an impressive opening episode, though, this first *Tomorrow People* story rapidly descends into laughably low-brow stuff, with dismal production values that looked bad even in the decade of the flare. Still, it *is* easy to see what captivated audiences at the time...

In the '70s, humans are on the brink of evolving into a superior state – *homo superior*. Certain teenagers, on reaching puberty "break out" – i.e. become Tomorrow People, with special

You can tell this is classic '70s sci-fi by the lights hidden under the tables...



Helmets provided by The New York Jets, backpacks from Acme Cooler Boxes, and jackets by a shop just off Carnaby Street that shut with the advent of punk. Lovely!

powers such as telepathy, telekinesis and the ability to teleport (or "jaunt"). In the suitably spooky opening episode, fully developed Tomorrow People John, Carol and Kenny are on the trail of Steven, who's on the brink of, gulp, "breaking out".

It's a good idea. The kids in the audience could dream they were potential Tomorrow People – and pubescents (who would be, of course, going through some big physical and psychological changes) could relish the idea that they might be about to become "special" any day now. It's a shame, then, that in practical terms all "breaking out" seemed to involve was fighting off biscuit-tin robots and conversing with hoover attachments...

"The Slaves of Jedikiah," it has to be said, bears all the hallmarks of a production made by people who simply didn't have a clue about, or interest in, science fiction. Roger Price has admitted that ITV technicians simply weren't used to dealing with CSO, and the results are appalling – great chunks of people and props vanish regularly. At one point – where Carol shrieks at John that his arm is disintegrating – you wonder whether it was in the script, or added when the director saw just how bad the effects were...

The sets, make-up and costumes are similarly unimaginative, reaching a nadir with the kind of robot that would have looked naff in a '30s *Flash Gordon* serial. The only element of this story which displays any real imagination is the opening title sequence – a bizarre montage of disturbing images zooming out of the screen, accompanied by a superb theme tune, provided by Dudley Simpson (a regular incidental music composer for, you guessed it, *Doctor Who*) – though some would say that The Tomorrow People HQ, hidden away in the London Underground system and packed with lava lamps and oil projectors, is pretty cool too.

Of the original Tomorrow People, the starched polar-neck jumper wearing John and wide-eyed Steven prove the most bearable. The rest of the cast, however, do very good impressions of people who wish they were doing something – anything – else...

It's a shame that after such a promising first episode this storyline deteriorates so rapidly. If, like me, you have fond memories of *homo superior*, you'll probably be *very* disappointed. It doesn't help that Video Gems has decided to release this opening adventure on two videos - the BBC managed to fit the five-episode *Who* story "The Mind Robber" on one – meaning that, at £20 for both vids, it's not going to entice floating voters. And if low sales mean less chance of a release for excellent later stories like "The Blue and the Green" and "The Dirtiest Business" then, for once, we should mourn a company releasing videos in the correct order.

D+

The hair, the shirt, the flares – the show predicted '90s baggy fashion with alarming accuracy.

ROBOCOP THE SERIES

Distributor: **One on One Video**
Production company: **Skyvision Entertainment**
Producer: **J Miles Dale**
Starring: **Richard Eden, Yvette Nipar, Blu Mankuma, David Gardner**
Release: **9 October**
Price: **£10.99 each**

Volume 1 **The Pilot (86 mins)** Cert: **12** C

Volume 2 **Ghost of War, Zone Five (84 mins)** Cert: **PG** C-

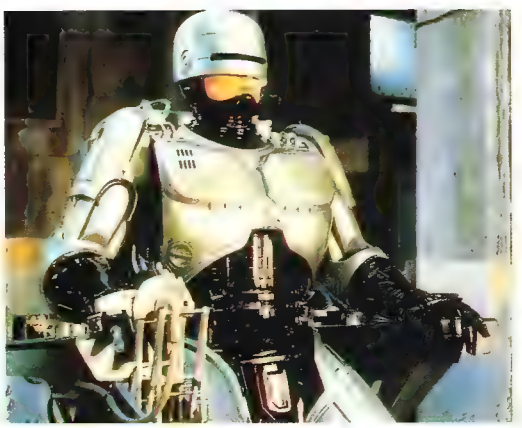
Volume 3 **Officer Missing, What Money Can't Buy (84 mins)** Cert: **PG** D+

Text: **Matt Bielby**

You sometimes have to wonder what the point of a show is. *RoboCop The Series* is hard to hate – the production design is too high for that, the performances too good (though none are stand-out), and the intent to reproduce the black humour and cleverness of the first movie all too apparent – but oh dear, why? It does almost everything the film did, just not as well. And without any degree of shock, since we've seen it a million times before. It's all a bit pointless, really...

That being the case then, I have to admit to really struggling with these three tapes of the Future of Law Enforcement's small screen adventures. My attention was wandering by ha f way tnrough the pilot, and I found myself reading a magazine as it ground to its inevitable conclusion. The second and third tapes I had to watch one episode at a time – "Off.cer Missing" while doing the washing up. Now, a couple of days later, I find it hard to remember which episode was which. They're all incredibly similar to each other, and follow a formula that goes something like this...

Some new crime-re.ated problem h'ts the streets of the Detroit of the near future – in "Officer Missing" it's a city-wide powercut, instigated by all-powerful corporation OCP to save money; in "Zone Five" it's the simultaneous arrival of deadly new drug "FUN" and a Guardian Angels-style vigilante gang. Cyborg cop Officer Murphy, aka RoboCop, ponders his loss of humanity – often remembering snatches of his 10-year-old son saying stuff like, "You're the best, Dad" (sniff) – while his tough-but-fair police boss and partner, Lisa Madigan, stand around being cute. RoboCop goes into action against the bad guys, only to get blown up by some unexpected super-weapon. It becomes clear that some renegade branch of OCP is responsible for the bad stuff. We get a fake news broadcast, reminding us of what's happening. RoboCop gets repaired, and with the help of his secret sidekick – a pretty secretary who's somehow become a virtual reality being - works out what's really going on. The bad guys hold someone hostage. RoboCop goes in and, this time, whups their asses – often in some clever way, like firing his gun so the bullet ricochets off the wall. OCP chairman gets outraged that some of his staff could be involved in such a thing, and sacks them all. RoboCop meets his son (who doesn't realise he's really his "dead" dad) in the flesh, and, after a bit of hesitation, decides not to tell him. Sniff (again). Fade to black.



Less of the same – the *RoboCop* series uses the same formula as the movies, but without the thrills.

Still, it can't be easy trying to act only using your jaw and lips...

It's fairly well done - but painfully predictable and, in the tragic Murphy, lacks a charismatic central presence. I can't really recommend these, though even I have to admit that futuristic news items like "Scottish rebels renew mortar attacks on Liverpool" hold a certain appeal...

Rian Hughes

The month in VIDEO

Reviews of SF/fantasy on VHS – to own and rent – plus Charts and what's coming up in October...

A.P.E.X.

MIA

Cert: **15**
Director: **Philip J Roth**
Starring: **Richard Keats, Mitchell Cox, Lisa Ann Russell**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **98 mins**
Price: **£10.99**
Text: **Jeremy Clarke**

Beer plus time travel movies equals lots of loud arguments about time paradoxes. True to form, *A.P.E.X.* should last you for a good few sessions down the local watering hole.

Like *Timecop* and *The Terminator* before it, *A.P.E.X.* chooses to focus on action rather than explore the concepts involved. Unlike those films, however, where the future basically serves as a backdrop to present-day action, *A.P.E.X.* is primarily set in wartorn future, and – unlike *Timecop*, at least – manages to make some sense too.

It's the year 2073, and Dr Sinclair (Keats) is tinkering with time travel. He's been sending the eponymous Advanced Prototype EXploration units – sort of *Doctor Who* men-in-suit monsters, but only half as unconvincing – back in time to 1973 through a computer-generated time tunnel.

But would you believe it? – a time paradox occurs, and Sinclair finds himself in an alternative 2073, in which humans have spent the last century fighting off A.P.E.X. units sent from the origina. 2073 that Sinclair came from. Are you still following?

The opening and closing reels explore this fertile territory with a good deal more intelligence than the bigger budgeted *Timecop*, but the middle of the film spends rather too much time in a parallel 2073, with Sinclair commanding a combat unit dodging deadly A.P.E.X. units *en route* to his old lab (inexplicably, not only present, but also intact, in this parallel time line). Action fans will be happy enough, sure, but anyone else will find the combat orientated mid-section a letdown.

D+

Body Bags

Polygram

Cert: **18**
Director: **John Carpenter**
Starring: **Stacey Keach, Mark Hamill, Debbie Harry**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **91 mins**
Price: **£10.99**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

A fun three-part anthology from John Carpenter, *Body Bags* is a made-for-TV series that was first aired back in 1993.

The first story is a straightforward yet atmospheric stalk 'n' slash tale, set in an all-night service station. Part two stars Stacey Keach as a balding man who tries a radical new form of hair restoration – and pays the price for his vanity. This has a great science fiction twist, plus Sheena Easton as his girlfriend, and – best of all – Debbie Harry dressed as a nurse. In the final section, there's a new twist on the old "Hands Of Orlac" story. Mark Hamill loses an eye, and then starts to see grisly things when he receives a murderer's eye *in lieu* of his lost organ...

Carpenter himself links the segments in (weird) character – from a morgue. Numerous other horror "names" make cameo appearances too notably Sam Raimi as a corpse.

Body Bags is undemanding, spooky, EC Comics-style fun, with plenty of shocks and laughs. It's a great way to pass an hour and a half too.

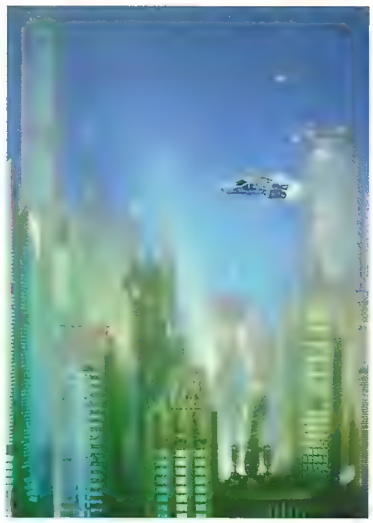
B+

SPACE PRECINCT

Distributor: **Polygram**
Executive Producer: **Gerry Anderson**
Starring: **Ted Shackleford, Rob Youngblood, Simone Bendix, Nancy Paul**
Cert: **12**
Price: **£12.99**
Text: **Maff Evans**

Volume One: **Protect and Survive/Time to Kill** B-

Volume Two: **The Snake/ Predator and Prey** B



Demeter City is the main backdrop to Gerry Anderson's latest sci-fi live-actioner.

Setting the tried and trusted cop-buddy format in bizarre environments has a long and not-so-noble tradition, but seldom has the environment been as new and strange as Demeter City. This is the new beat of two veteran NYPD cops, Patrick Brogan (Ted Shackleford) and Jack Haldane (Rob Youngblood), who've taken part in an officer exchange scheme.

It's hardly *Hill Street Blues* in space, but that old media magpie Gerry Anderson has managed to weave a package from such diverse sources as *Buck Rogers* and *Starsky and Hutch* (among others). If this sounds like a piss-take, hold on. *Space Precinct's* cocktail of *Thunderbirds*-style action, *Starsky and Hutch* buddy cops and *Buck Rogers* SF hokum works well, in these opening episodes at least.

Things get off to a slow (but violent) start with "Protect and Survive," in which illegal immigrant Xyronites infect Demeter City with Xyron fever. The rest of the pilot, however, is a melting pot of well-used ingredients – the cop's family troubles, a vital witness to be protected, and a ruthless gangland criminal with dubious connections. "Time to Kill" switches the combination, focusing more on the SF story of a vigilante cyborg picking off a counterfeiting team, as well as Brogan. This episode accelerates the pace, but the premise is weak.

Volume two is much better. "The Snake" introduces the idea of a super-criminal – a bomber who extorts money from large corporations by threatening them with deadly explosive devices. When a large cruiser is armed with four bombs, Brogan and Haldane have some difficult choices to make. The tape concludes with "Predator and Prey," probably the spookiest episode here. An evil being, Kmada, is killing girls from a number of clubs, and Brogan and Haldane have to track down the killer, who is supposed to have died 100 years ago. However, Kmada isn't all he appears to be, and there are more problems to deal with than simply finding the killer and closing the case...

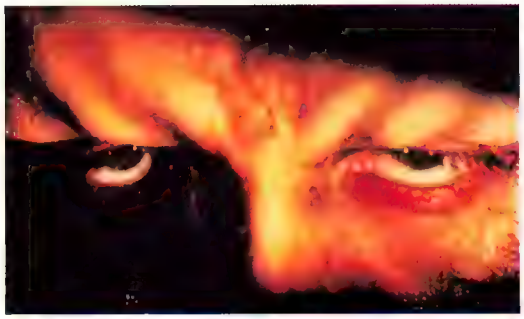
Although most SF these days seems to be chasing the heels of *The X-Files* – all dark, moody scenery, government conspiracy theories and twisting sub-plots – and *Space Precinct* is a return to the age old tradition of OTT science fiction nonsense. Once you get over the *Muppet*-like aliens, the scene-setting, characterisation and acting are more than satisfactory. This is coupled with stacks of Saturday *matinée* action and fast-paced TV cop mania – all packaged to make a slick, tongue-in-cheek and, yes, entertaining whole. Sometimes the plots are a little shaky (as are one or two of the model shots), but when a twist pops up and the special effects shine (which, to be honest, they do most of the time) *Space Precinct* proves a very enjoyable way to while away an hour.

Okay, it's more *Buck Rogers* than *Babylon 5*, but these opening instalments at least display an energy, excitement and sense of fun that's lacking in subsequent episodes. The show could have gone either way – a pity it chose down...

CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF

Terror Vision (Warners Bros)
+ collectors' cards

Cert: **12**
Director: **Terence Fisher**
Starring: **Oliver Reed, Yvonne Romain, Clifford Evans**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **87 mins**
Price: **£10.99**
Text: **MJ Simpson**



How your eyes will look about half an hour into watching *Curse...*

Most great monster movies take a fair old time to actually get round to showing the monster. It's called "a story" – and *Curse of the Werewolf* has plenty of it. The werewolf isn't born until 25 minutes into the film, and it's a while longer before it grows into a hunky, young Oliver Reed. This isn't a film about people living in fear of a werewolf – it's about a young man living in fear of himself.

This is one of Hammer's best flicks, with superb Roy Ashton make-up and a great script, based on Guy Endore's *The Werewolf of Paris*. Oliver Reed is simply terrific, as are the supporting cast.

But this is another in Warner's Terror Vision series: All packaging and no content. *Curse of the Werewolf* was butchered by the BBFC when released in 1960, with nearly two minutes' worth of cuts, which included most of the final scene. These edits are extremely obvious, and completely ruin the story. A restored version exists, but this isn't it. In fact, it's not even a particularly good quality print.

Curse of the Werewolf as a film ranks an A, but I simply can't recommend this particular vid, even though it's getting its first UK release here. When will Warners put as much effort into choosing prints as it does in finding trailers and printing collectors' cards?

D

BABYLON 5

Distributor: **Warner Brothers (Beyond Vision)**
Director: **Various**
Starring: **Michael O'Hare, Claudia Christian, Peter Jurasik...**
Cert: **PG**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **84 minutes each**
Price: **£10.99 each**
Text: **Dan Goodleff**

Tape 6:
Survivors/By Any Means Necessary **C**

Tape 7:
Signs and Portents/TKO **B**

Seems this guy not only starred in "TKO" – he had the misfortune to watch it afterwards too. Cheer up, mate...

This is really *so* annoying. If only *Babylon 5* could maintain the kind of pace and interesting diversity of "Signs and Portents," season one would have been something really special. As it stands, you have to wade through a clutch of pedestrian individual episodes, which only occasionally dip into the big story arcs, before you tap into anything remotely juicy.

A valuable Centauri royal heirloom, a daffy visiting seeress (brilliantly played by Sinead O'Connor-alike Fredi Olster), who predicts the downfall of Babylon 5, the Shadows (complete with wibbly-wobbly squid ship), the enigmatic Mr Morden, a top space *melée*, and arc-vital appearances by Delenn, Kosh, G'Kar and Londo – that's "Signs and Portents," which packs in comedy, melodrama and a fascinating *Twin Peaks* sense of menace into its 50 minutes; all credit to director Janet Greek for bringing a much-needed dark tone to the proceedings.

This is *Babylon 5* running at full tilt, with some superb Raider/Star Fury confrontations, and great character interaction. Shame, then, that the other episode on the tape, "TKO," is so *awful*... A disgraced prize-fighter from Earth, and friend of Garibaldi, enters an alien boxing tournament, and, after much soul-searching on the nature of honour, duty and cliché, gains the aliens' respect. Yawn. Meanwhile, a visiting Rabbi forces Commander Ivanova to re-evaluate the relationship with her deceased father – and grieve. Fortunately, Claudia Christian brings out the humanity of the commander without slapping on too much schmaltz.

Volume 6 is comparatively disappointing. In "Survivors," Garibaldi is implicated in a plot to kill the visiting Earthforce President when a bomb goes off on Babylon 5. Matters are complicated by the arrival of the head of Presidential Security, who has a personal grudge against the biscuit-named one and seems intent on b aming him for the crime. Entertaining, if only for Jerry Doyle's hackneyed drunk impress on in a seedy bar...

Unlike "By Any Means Necessary," however, in which workers strike after an accident in the docking bay, and Commander Sinclair is forced to re-interpret the small print of the tyrannous "Rush act" – a kind of galactic Criminal Justice Bill – to please his superiors (who want the strike ruthlessly quashed) and the workers (who want more money). This is so simplistic it's like watching a report from *Newsround*, and the dockers, all 30 of them it seems, continuously voice their discontent by murmuring and mumbling unconvincingly in the background. One that sounded better on paper, methinks. Even the slightly amusing B-story – G'Kar requires a rare flower which only Londo possesses so that he may perform a sacred ceremony – fails to buoy things up.

Collectively, then, not *Babylon 5* at its best (although Volume 7 is worth it just for "Signs and Portents," and the babbling Lady Ladira).

THE HUNGER

Terror Vision (Warner Bros)
Widescreen, trailer
+ collectors' cards

Cert: **18**
Director: **Tony Scott**
Starring: **Catherine Deneuve, David Bowie, Susan Sarandon**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **93 mins**
Price: **£12.99**
Text: **Jeremy Clarke**

Early on in his career, Tony Scott was tagged with the double whammy "brother of Ridley Scott/commercials production chic" label – after rewatching 1983's *The Hunger*, it's easy to see why.

Much effort has been lavished on the glossy visuals, which make great use of Widescreen, but add little to the story. There's tons of opera and chamber music on the soundtrack, and Deneuve's ancient and spacious New York apartment is filled with more than its fair share of billowing drapes, lifted straight from Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast*. The trailer (spot Willem Dafoe's drug dealer walk-on) sells the tale's vampirism as a metaphor for drug addiction, but the film is equally about the blue-blooded ones' insatiable greed – Deneuve incarcerating successive lovers in coffin-style wooden cases as they become too decrepit to satisfy her physical desires.

The film opens with punk band Bauhaus singing *Bela Lugosi's Dead*, while Bowie and Deneuve literally pick up their late takeaway meal in the form of a nightclubbing goth couple, while the finale boasts a quasi-gratuitous nod to zombie movies with extras clad in superb old-aged make-up by effects genius Dick Smith.

In-between, Bowie ages from 30 to 90 in a day, while longevity research scientist Sarandon, suckered into the couple's orbit through an understandable obsession with Bowie's unnaturally rapid aging, finds herself becoming the lesbian plaything for Deneuve. Well, with Bowie flaking all over the place you can hardly blame Deneuve looking elsewhere for her kicks...

And all the while, smoke swirls in the light, broken into streaks by Venetian blinds, and characters mutter meaningless wibble with all the meaningfulness they can muster. Hollow.

C

Deneuve and Bowie wander through the designer gloom of *The Hunger*.

The month in VIDEO

Logan's Run

Beyond Vision (Warner Bros)

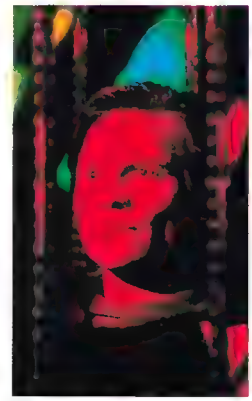
Cert: **PG**
Director: **Michael Anderson**
Starring: **Michael York, Jenny Agutter, Peter Ustinov**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **114 minutes**
Price: **£14.99**
Text: **Stephen Applebaum**

In the past, we've often expressed our affection for '70s science fiction – the films that came between *2001* and *Star Wars*, like *Planet of the Apes* or *Rollerball* – and *Logan's Run* is yet more classic stuff from that era.

It's set, of course, in a post-apocalyptic future – society has sealed itself inside a giant bubble (funnily enough, many scenes look like they were filmed inside a then-new shopping centre, and indeed they were), where people are free to live a hedonistic existence until they reach 30, whereupon they're compelled to commit suicide under the misapprehension they're going to a "better place."

York is a policeman – or 'sandman" – charged with capturing runaways, of which there are a few. But when an undercover assignment gives him a taste of the outside world – and his own 30th birthday looms – he soon turns against the system he once supported.

Along the way, York discovers love on the run with Jenny Agutter (Farrah Fawcett, the other love interest, disappointingly only appearing on-screen for a few minutes),



Michael York faces the problems of aging in *Logan's Run*.

and learns about the "joys" of old age, thanks to a crinkly, charming Ustinov as a sort of down-and-out Santa Claus figure, who has inexplicably survived for decades among the ruins of Washington DC without any discernible food source.

Logan's Run's vision of the future is very much of its time, and has a certain charm. But while some SF movies of the period manage to rise above their '70s tack by the sheer power of their concepts, *Logan's Run*, a determinedly action-orientated affair, is stuck firmly in the past. Its realisation of a 23rd century city is spectacular, however – setting dayglo lurex and Silvikrin Girl-style hairdos against a backdrop of multi-coloured neon, silvered surfaces and all-too-recognisable shop-fronts. It all looks terrific in this Widescreen version too.

Visuals aside, *Logan's Run* remains a fairly clichéd and unimaginative SF film. Still, the original poster tag line was great: "In this perfect world of total pleasure you can have everything except your 30th birthday. Logan is 29."

C+

The Lost Boys

Terror Vision (Warner Bros)
Letterbox, trailer
+ collectors' cards

Cert: **15**
Director: **Joel Schumacher**
Starring: **Jason Patric, Corey Haim, Kiefer Sutherland**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **93 mins**
Price: **£12.99**
Text: **Cavan Scott**

***Batman Forever* wasn't director Joel Schumacher's first brush with flying rodents. Back in 1987, he helmed this self-consciously stylish horror comedy. Not that it's particularly funny – though it has its moments – or very horrific, despite a couple of decent shocks. But it is stylish, in an '80s pop video sort of a way.**

When Michael and his younger brother Sam are brought by their mother to live with their batty taxidermist grandpa in Santa Carla, a sort of Californian Blackpool with a lot of missing children posters, it quickly becomes clear that Things Are Not Quite Right in

SOMETHING FISHY

The Sea Devils
Distributor: **BBC Video**
Director: **Michael Briant**
Starring: **Jon Pertwee, Katy Manning, Roger Delgado**
Cert: **PG**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **149 mins**
Price: **£16.99**

B+

Warriors of the Deep
Distributor: **BBC Video**
Director: **Pennant Roberts**
Starring: **Peter Davison, Janet Fielding, Mark Strickson**
Cert: **PG**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **97 mins**
Price: **£10.99**

D+

Text: **Dave Golder**

Well, what do you expect if you insist on going swimming next to Sellafield?

Ask anyone old enough to remember the Jon Pertwee era to list their top ten memorable moments from *Doctor Who*, and you can bet most will mention the image of the Sea Devils, emerging from the Solent, wielding electric cooker hobs.

"The Sea Devils" is a classic piece of Pertwee *Who*, and the Sea Devils themselves are classic monsters, despite the string vests, Larry The Lamb voices and obvious fact the actors were looking out through the costumes' necks. They may look faintly ridiculous by today's standards, but in terms of design and impact they still hold up phenomenally well, considering.

"The Sea Devils" is Malcolm Hulke's 1972 sequel to his 1970 story "Doctor Who and the Silurians," in which the reptilian race that ruled the Earth before humans suddenly awoke from an overlong hibernation to find their planet infested with – ugh! – mammals. The Sea Devils are their aquatic cousins, and, as with the Silurians, the audience is asked to sympathise with their plight – they're not simply marauding monsters. Pertwee tries to act as a mediator between the humans and reptiles, but, as always, the military has other ideas.

Warriors of the not-very-convincing kind...

Okay, so the morals are laid on thicker than tarmac, with Pertwee getting a chance to be indignant about human intolerance every other scene. But it's a fast-moving story, with a bigger action-quota than usual for *Who*, and helped massively by a substantial amount of location filming around Portsmouth. Although UNIT is absent, the involvement of the Royal Navy gives the story the requisite muscle-brained military thinking, while the regulars are universally superb. The verbal sparring between Pertwee and Delgado's Master is a joy. And watch out for *The Clangers*.

The main problem with "The Sea Devils" is that, at six episodes long, it comes with an awful lot of padding and pointless running around. It also means that BBC Video has another excuse for a double-video release.

11 years later the Sea Devils returned, along with their Silurian chums (who should really be called Eocenians, apparently), in "Warriors of the Deep." It's a sound enough, if old-fashioned, story, which could have fitted neatly into the Troughton era. It's 100 years into the future, and Davison's Doctor arrives on a military base on the sea-bed, just as two opposing superpowers look set to use any excuse to start a nuclear war. Which is just what the Silurians would like to see – humans wiping themselves out. To get things going, they wake a shock troop of Sea Devils from hibernation to invade the base and instigate war.

Despite the fact that this time around the two "alien" races act like thugs and elicit no sympathy, the script has the potential to become an exciting romp. The problem is the appalling production values, lacklustre direction and cheesy po-faced dialogue, which let things down terribly. The pantomime monster known as The Myrka (played by the men who did Dobbin in *Rent-a-Ghost*) is laughably bad too, but rubber airlock doors, overlit sets, dreary acting and an almost complete lack of humour add to the general humdrumness.

Even worse is the new design for the Sea Devils. While the updated Silurians are pretty good (if portly), the Sea Devils have been shorn of their distinctive neck webbing and string vests. Here they wear ridiculously over the-top Samurai-style outfits, their heads flop around, and even their guns have been replaced by ridiculous hand-held vacuum cleaners.

"Warriors of the Deep" isn't *Doctor Who* at its worst by a long shot – anyone remember "Horns of Nimon"? – but as a sequel to two classic stories, it *is* a severe let-down.

Kiefer Sutherland is the head teenage vampire in *The Lost Boys*.

Oddtown. Michael soon spots the resident babe and goes a-wooing, only to make an instant enemy of David (Kiefer Sutherland), her sinister semi-boyfriend, who subsequently lures the foolish Michael into the debauched hedonistic lifestyle of the undead.

As time goes by, observant Sam starts noticing that his brother is beginning to behave a little oddly (Well, it's not everyday that you see your big bro floating outside the upstairs window, is it?), while MTV vampires, comic shop geeks, creepy suitors for mum and endless sweeping helicopter shots of the local fairground and coastal scenery make for atmospheric, if rather shallow, fun.

Kiefer Sutherland is really the only vampire worth mentioning from the gang who rule Santa Clara – the others, including the chap who would later become Keanu Reeves' pal Bill Preston Esq., do little more than stroll around tossing their hair in an attempt to look moody, eventually exploding, dissolving or expiring in various 15 certificate-allowable ways. But, despite this, Kiefer makes for an effectively creepy baddie. Some of the supporting characters are amusing too.

The Lost Boys is an essentially hollow movie, which survives by refusing to take itself too seriously – the scene where Sam and a bunch of his pals go a-vampire killing, for example, is particularly memorable. And despite the '80s look – rolling aerial camera shots and dodgy hair dos – it's stood the test of time well. You can see a lot of *Batman Forever* in here too...

B

THE MANGLER

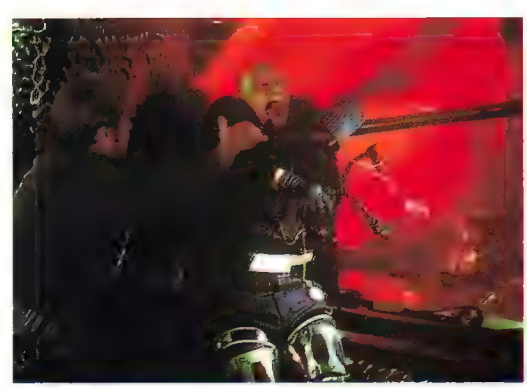
Guild Home Video

Cert: **18**
Director: **Tobe Hooper**
Starring: **Robert Englund, Ted Levine, Daniel Matmor**
Release: **Out now** (rental)
Running time: **101 mins**
Text: **Stuart Campbell**

It must be hard being Stephen King. Once you've thought up psycho cars, telekinetic pubescents and people who can see disasters in the future, coming up with original ideas is never going to be easy. Then again, it's no picnic being a freelancer for SFX either...

Picture the scene: It's a balmy Summer evening, the sort that's ideal for sitting on your balcony with a nice glass of cool citrus cordial and a few Summer sounds on the stereo. So what do I do? Do I sit and watch the sun going down over the park, maybe chill out with a couple of good friends and breathe the cool night air? Nope, I sit in front of a TV and subject myself to the 101 minutes of complete rubbish that is *The Mangler*.

Now, the premise that the villain of your piece is a giant immobile sheet-ironing machine is pretty ludicrous to start with. Simultaneously battling against a script that has all your characters continually sticking bits of their bodies into said machine, even when they've ascertained beyond the remotest shred of doubt that it's possessed by an evil demon, doesn't help much either. A plot with more holes in it than a string vest factory could be the final straw (by the end I'd utterly given up on having the faintest idea what was actually happening), but if that doesn't finish you off completely, then how about some ham acting of the highest order, with people yelling in what sounds like mild discomfort while being slowly and agonisingly ground to death in an industrial crushing machine gone insane?



Robert Englund's demonic laundry owner just can't get his white's white.

Fortunately, when *The Mangler* reached its phew-it's-dead-or-is-it-well-blow-me-no-it-isn't "surprise" ending, I was already lying on the floor in front of the telly. Otherwise, I might have fallen out of my chair laughing, perhaps incurring some minor injury. Be thankful for that, and for the fact that I watched this credulity-shreddingly poor film so you don't have to go through the same agony.

In *The Mangler's* defence, it must be said that if you invite a few mates round and drink a lot of beer, you might squeeze out a few laughs, if you treat it as a comedy. And why not? After all, Tobe Hooper is most definitely taking the piss.

D

I WAS A '50s B-MOVIE

Corridors of Blood
Director: **Robert Day**
Starring: **Boris Karloff, Christopher Lee, Francis Matthews**
Cert: **15**

B

First Man Into Space
Director: **Robert Day**
Starring: **Marla Landi**
Cert: **PG**

B

The Brain
Director: **Freddie Francis**
Starring: **Peter Van Eyck, Anne Heyward**
Cert: **12**

C

The Atomic Submarine
Director: **Spencer G Bennet**
Starring: **Arthur Franz, Dick Foran**
Cert: **PG**

C

Distributor: **Encore Entertainment**
Price: **£10.99 each**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

The past few years have seen a surprisingly large number of old B-movies finally getting UK video releases, which is definitely a Good Thing. Now Encore is launching into the field with a quartet of rare classics.

Corridors of Blood isn't strictly SF – and only just qualifies as medical horror but is a 1958 melodrama about a Victorian doctor's search for an anaesthetic and his collapse into addiction. What makes this otherwise standard fare worth watching, though, is the superb Karloff, while Christopher Lee plays the murderer Resurrection Joe. (By the way, this is a rare chance to see two generations of Frankenstein monster on screen together.)

First Man into Space was made by the same director for the same company in the same year, but is a totally different affair. There's a definite *Quatermass* feel to events as a test pilot leaves Earth, but disappears when his rocket-plane returns to Earth. A series of grisly murders lead his brother to a hideous monster which is actually the pilot covered in cosmic gunge.

Extensive use of stock footage from NASA's '50s space programme works surprisingly well, lending the project an air of authenticity. There's some dodgy dialogue, but this is a fine piece of Brit-SF and well worth a look.

Less entertaining is *The Brain* (aka *Vengeance*), although it is of interest as a reworking of Curt Siodmak's *Donovan's Brain*, which gained Freddie Francis his first job with Hammer. Wisely eschewing the novel's psychological intensity, it unfortunately then opts instead for a straightforward murder mystery. It's not bad, but it's a not-bad whodunnit, and the brain plays little part in the proceedings.

The only real turkey here is *The Atomic Submarine*, which mixes bad stock footage with bad model work, and has a story that makes *Waterworld* look like a literary masterpiece. The characters are stereotypes and the whole thing is narrated by a poor man's Criswell. It's just about bad enough to be entertaining.

That said, this is a pretty good initial batch from Encore, and I'm eager to see what else they've got lined up...

The month in VIDEO

Spirit of the Pharaoh makes use of computer-generated backgrounds.

SPIRIT OF THE PHARAOH

Future Promises

Cert: **PG**
Creator/director: **Terry Jervis**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **41 mins**
Price **£9.99**
Text: **Jeremy Clarke**

When is anime not actually anime? When it's graphic action.

Don't be fooled by the pictures! These stills might look impressive, but, when you actually see *Spirit of the Pharaoh* moving, you'll soon realise this is no anime masterpiece, but rather *Captain Pugwash* done on an Amiga computer.

Future Promises, the new independent British film making company behind the film, like to call the technique "graphic action." What this means is a combination of computer-generated imagery in the background, and static, comic book-style characters in the foreground. In other words, when two characters run down a corridor, the background CGI moves, while the static characters jiggle up and down. Amazingly, a lot of the time this approach actually *works*.

Which is more than can be said for the plot. British industrial magnate Lord Welton of Wel-tec leads a party to an Egyptian pyramid to find the Lost Tomb of Ra'Mun so he can get his hands on Ra'Mun's magical, eternal, life-giving Ankh. His plans arouse opposition both natural and supernatural – the former represented by his daughter and an Egyptologist; and the latter by the spirits of King Ea'Mun and Queen Neferkari.

The Pharaoh's spirits, aided by Ra'Mun's faithful pet monkey, further complicate events by possessing, and dressing in old Egyptian attire, two present-day descendants – young black pop star Raymond Randle and his girlfriend Marie – so they can do battle with the evil god of Chaos Seth.

It's all resolutely juvenile stuff, naturally enough, coming across more like *Ulysses 31* than *Akira*, and the accompanying soul/disco soundtrack doesn't help (but then director Terry Jervis does come from a pop video background). It's definitely a product of the computer game age, and it's no surprise to learn that a CD-i version is on its way.

Occasionally visually appealing, *Spirit of the Pharaoh* is an interesting experiment, and, though it isn't much cop, I'd be surprised if the techniques used didn't catch on.

PROJECT SHADOWCHASER

Beyond the Edge of Darkness

Distributor: **Columbia/Tristar**
Cert: **18**
Director: **John Eyres**
Starring: **Sam Bottoms, Musetta Vander, Frank Zagarino**
Release: **4 October** (rental)
Running time: **94 mins**

Night Siege

Distributor: **Polygram**
Cert: **18**
Director: **John Eyres**
Starring: **Frank Zagarino**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **93 mins**

Price: **£10.99 each**
Text: **Andy Stout**

Apart from the writing and directing credits, and a weird predilection for ending with a crap joke and some chirpy music, the only thing linking these two films is Dolph-a-like Frank Zagarino – and even he moves from being an android in the first outing to a terrorist taking over a nuclear weapons facility in the second. It's a bit like the *Carry On* films, really – you get the same

Oddly, the two *Shadowchaser* films seem to have very little in common.

THE OUTER LIMITS

Distributor: **Beyond Vision (Warner Bros)**
Starring: **Various**
Cert: **PG**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **102 mins each**
Price: **£7.99**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

Volume 1: **The Hundred Days of the Dragon/The Galaxy Being**

Volume 2: **The Man with the Power/The Architects of Fear**

Forget the totally crap "new" *Outer Limits*. These tapes are the original series, when the production concentrated on stories, not flashy fx, and when you couldn't work out the entire plot from the *Radio Times* listing.

Strangely enough, the first episode on Volume 1, "The Hundred Days of the Dragon," is an atypical episode, lacking aliens, robots, astronauts, spaceships or time-travel. An un named Oriental power develops a technique of remoulding people's faces into the exact likeness of somebody else, and fiendishly plans to take over the US senate by substituting one of its agents for a dead cert Presidential candidate.

His daughter and son-in-law soon suss something's wrong, but who can they trust when anybody could be an enemy double? Sadly, too much time is spent showing off the face-changing effects, and

"The Galaxy Being" was the first ever *Outer Limits* episode, and had a great alien.

Donald Pleasence stars as a bald bloke with staring eyes in "The Man with the Power."

the theme of political paranoia is never really developed.

Much better is "The Galaxy Being," a great first-contact story in which a lone radio engineer creates a holographic image of an alien being. His attempts to communicate are hampered by social obligations, and unwitting interference from colleagues soon precipitates the alien's materialisation on Earth. Using simple effects to create a very other-worldly being, our sympathy lies totally with the alien as terrified humans try to kill it, when all it wants is to return home.

Donald Pleasence stars in "The Man with the Power" as a quiet teacher who develops a telekinetic device which he has implanted in his brain, acting as a guinea-pig for the space administration who plan to use it to move asteroids. It's rather a creaky story, but Pleasence is great.

Finally, there's "The Architects of Fear," which is, I'm afraid, dreadful. There are two good ideas: First, a group of powerful scientists attempt to unite humanity by creating an artificial extra-terrestrial threat, and, second, this "alien" is actually a surgically altered human being. But the story seems to centre more on the "alien's" empathy with his wife, and the allegorical aspects are largely ignored.

More to the point, the make-up is terrible, and the miniature prototype alien is mostly represented as a shaking, screaming box which look like something out of Marty Feldman's "vet's waiting room" sketch!

It just goes to show that the original series could be as bad as the updated version – then again, "The Galaxy Being" shows it could be a damn sight better too...

Standard cheapo monster make-up in *Project Shadowchaser.*

cast in each one, but the roles they play are totally different. (Well, okay, maybe not *that* different – Babs Windsor seemed forever to be losing her bra and giggling saucily – but you get the general idea.)

From its opening shot of a very large spaceship slowly drifting past the camera to one of the closing sequences involving a homicidal, legless and crawling android, *Beyond the Edge of Darkness* shamelessly plagiarises as many films as it can in the space of an hour and a half. It's a blatant cut-'n'-paste job, throwing bits and pieces from *The Thing, Alien, Terminator* and a host of others into a hat, juggling them around and hoping that the resulting mess is halfway watchable.

The story begins when 25 years after mysteriously disappearing in rather suspicious circumstances (the crew killed by a lunatic, shape-changing android, to be exact), the mining ship Siberia re-appears out of the blue and collides with a communications satellite orbiting Mars. In the resulting prang, two of the crew are snuffed out, and you can start safely placing bets on who's going to make it to the escape pods and who's going to suffer a grisly death.

So far, so formulaic. The crew are a rag-tag bunch of neurotics, there's a cute dog on board, people get killed one by one, the obligatory nasty crew member is played by an Englishman, and the inside of the Siberia looks suspiciously like an oil refinery. Derivative in the extreme, but not badly acted, *Beyond the Edge of Darkness* is enjoyable, if completely mindless.

In *Night Siege,* Zagarino and his gang have, in pursuit of a secret weapon, massacred everyone in a nuclear weapons facility except a single parent, her son and an alcoholic love interest type-person. It's Christmas, so obviously the terrorists get defeated, the love-interest kicks the booze, and all three retire for a slap-up turkey feast at the end. Appalling.

ALSO RELEASED

ASSORTED BITS 'N' BOBS, FROM BUDGET RELEASES TO THE LATEST INSTALMENTS IN ON-GOING GENRE SERIES, RATED BY THE DEDICATED SFX TEAM...

Reviews by: Dave Golder **(DG),** Wil Overton **(WO)** and Stephen Applebaum **(SA)**

When it comes to movie versions of Stephen King novels, the very first, **Carrie** *(Dir: Brian de Palma, 18, £7.99), is still one of the best. Sissy Spacek plays Carrie, naive pubescent daughter of religious nutter Piper Laurie, who develops telekinetic powers. Mum locks her in the cupboard and prays for her soul while schoolmates (including John Travolta) plan a bloody surprise for her at the prom. Despite some dubious '70s camera trickery, de Palma's direction is superbly edgy, and the tension is almost suffocating as the story flits between Carrie's bizarre home life, and* American Graffiti*-style high school japery. You just know it's all going to end in tears. And blood. And, indeed, fire.* **(DG)**

Not so much a movie as an excuse for a series of bizarre and increasingly gory deaths, **Fortress** *(Dir: Stuart Gordon, 18, £10.99) stars a bored-looking Christopher Lambert in a futuristic prison drama. Not a patch on* No Escape. *Fortress boasts a few competent action sequences, but that's about all it has to recommend it. Stuffed with clichés and the kind of mechanical plot devices a computer could churn out, this is, strangely enough, straight-to-video fodder which had a cinematic release. God knows how.* **(DG)**

It was only after a good ten minutes watching this unofficial Doctor Who *vid,* **The Doctors – 30 Years of Time Travel and Beyond** *(Astrion, 0121 500 5678, £12.99), that we realised it hadn't actually featured any clips from the show itself yet. Not that this is a problem – it's such an absorbing documentary, you don't really need them. Don't be put off by the tape's connections with the Boxtree Book; despite being slightly formless, and with a few odd choices of interviewees (Don Henderson?), this is packed with exclusive, and very candid, interviews (especially with Colin Baker and producer John Nathan-Turner) and excellent behind-the-scenes footage. Produced and directed by* Stranger supremo *Bill Baggs, it's a vital buy for all Whovians.* **(DG)**

Rock 'n' roll really is the Devil's music in **Trick or Treat** *(Dir. Charles Martin Smith, 18, £10.99), an atmospheric riff on* Carrie. *Bullied metal-head Eddie (Marc Price) accidentally invokes the spirit of dead rock star Sammi Curr (Tony Fields) by playing his last record backwards. He walks tall and cool under Curr's protection, but is forced to turn against his one-time idol when the pop star reveals his evil plans. Although director Smith doesn't exploit the full potential of his material, this is still good creepy fun, thanks to some terrific* Videodrome*-style special effects, Price's credible performance and a amusing cameos by Ozzy Osbourne and Gene Simmons.* **(SA)**

And now for a quick round-up of this month's Manga releases...

The Heroic Legend of Arslan – Part 3 *(PG, £11.99) Stiff upper-lip RADA accents don't really lend anything to this over delayed continuation of this sometimes less than action-packed saga, packed with shojo (pretty boys), kings and knights.* **(WO)**

New Dominion Tank Police – Act 10 *(15, £5.99) Have tank, will engage in fairly average action comedy. For completists only.* **(WO)**

Angel Cop – Part 5 *(18, £5.99) Delivers perfectly what the demographics would have us believe the core audience for Japanese animation in the West wants – girls, guns and gore.* **(WO)**

Project A-Ko 3 – Cinderella Rhapsody *(12, £9.99) More mayhem and madness from the girls with stupid names. Although not that different to previous outings, this is still fun enough to warrant consideration.* **(WO)**

THX1138

Beyond Vision
(Warner Brothers)
Widescreen + collectors' cards

Cert: **15**
Director: **George Lucas**
Starring: **Robert Duvall, Donald Pleasence**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **83 minutes**
Price: **£12.99**
Text: **Dave Golder**

When it comes to the auteur theory, you won't find many film studies students picking George Lucas as a case study. For a start, he's only done three films, and then the only two that seem even vaguely similar – *THX1138* and *Star Wars* – are about as poles apart as poles can get.

In place of the whizz-bang *Star Wars* fantasy universe – in which good is good, evil wears black and everything runs along well-defined, easy-to-grasp lines – *THX1138* presents a bleak, sterile Orwellian future, where people are little more than numbered drones, subdued by constant drug intake, and any kind of sexual activity is a crime.

Duvall plays THX1138, a worker who begins to have forbidden thoughts and feelings and then ends up having sex with his room mate. This lands him in jail, but he soon escapes and makes his way to freedom outside the horrifically controlled and creepy confines of the city.

THX1138: Recommended viewing for people with black and white TVs.

Like Carpenter's *Dark Star, THX* started out as a university project (snappily titled "THX 2238 4EB"), and the full-blown version still shows signs of arty student pretension. But while the basically simplistic plot is muddied by the unfocused, confused direction, the images impress throughout – stark white corridors, masses of bald-headed workers, impassive, metal-faced police officers, a computerised "confession" booth which absolves sins automatically, children being drip-fed their lessons... There are no ground-breaking SF ideas presented here, sure, but heaped together they help suggest one of the most eerily convincing SF worlds ever committed to screen, pre-*Blade Runner* at least. And this was made in 1970, remember...

Constantly intriguing rather than entertaining, *THX1138* is a bizarre curiosity which shows little evidence of what was to come from George Lucas in either *American Graffiti* or *Star Wars.* Although I bet some clever sod will soon be writing a thesis to prove otherwise.

Coming soon

Blake's 7 **Out now**
13 volumes of Terry Nation's cult series (seasons one and two). Available for six months at a bargain price of £7.99. These will be withdrawn next January and never be released again. Just think, no more fishtank jokes...

The Flintstones **Out now**
John Goodman stars as Fred, and some things have the word "rock" or "stone" in their names. Damn! We've just given away the entire plot and both jokes. Rick Moranis and Rosie O'Donnell plumb new depths of miscasting as the Rubbles in this turkeysaurus rex.

Star Trek: Generations (Rental) **Out now**
Adios to the old crew and a big hello to those young *Next Gen* tikes in this, the seventh big-screen outing. Watch out for Kirk's death scene and your chance to crack the "Bridge on the Captain" joke!

Big **Out now**
Tom Hanks stars in one of several *Vice Versa*-esque movies which appeared in 1988. Here he plays a kid who magically grows up and discovers what it's like being an adult. Better then *Gump,* and without the schmaltz.

Shrunken Heads (Rental) **Out now**
Mega-bizarre tale of three cranially reduced, torso-deprived "superheroes" from Full Moon, the people who made such straight-to-video fare as *Dollman, Demonic Toys, Trancers* etc... Stars composer Danny Elfman's brother!

The Tomorrow People **Out now**
Surprisingly successful revamp of the old '70s series. For a review of the first batch of tapes, see page 84.

SF Video Charts

A funny thing happened...

So why is a documentary at the top of the vid chart this month? Well, we all know it was fake, and that makes it fiction in our book (yeah, contentious). We thought the British were supposed to be a nation of sceptics, but Roswell seems to have turned the UK UFO/conspiracy theorists crazy. We blame it all on *The X-Files.*

Warners' new Beyond Vision label also seems to be doing well, already claiming three places in the Top 10. *Forbidden Planet* even manages a leap of seven places up the chart. Get in there, as they say...

HMV SF Top 10

1 **Incident at Roswell** (Momentum)
2 **Forbidden Planet** (Beyond Vision/Warner Bros)
3 **Star Wars** (Fox Video)
4 **Roswell – The Film** (Polygram)
5 **Soylent Green** (Beyond Vision/Warner Bros)
6 **The X-Files Box Set Volume 2** (Fox Video)
7 **Planet of the Apes** (Fox)
8 **Outland** (Beyond Vision/Warner Bros)
9 **Star Trek: Voyager 1.4** (CIC)
10 **Deep Space Nine 3.11** (CIC)

BOOK Reviews

"Clute is at his best in the section on major authors. There is no-one better in the world at pinpointing what makes an author tick."

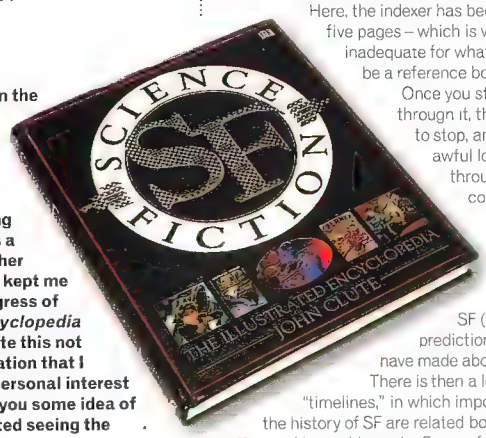
SF THE ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPEDIA

It boasts beautiful presentation and the usual Clute decisiveness, but...

Author: **John Clute**
Publisher: **Dorling Kindersley hardback**
Price/page count: **£25, 312pp**
ISBN: **0-7153-0202-3**

Text: **John Grant**

Cards on the table time: I've known about this book for a long time. John Clute is a colleague of mine on other projects, and obviously kept me informed about the progress of *SF: The Illustrated Encyclopedia* as he worked on it. I state this not just to avoid any accusation that I might be concealing a personal interest in the book, but to give you some idea of just how eagerly I awaited seeing the finished product.



This is a big, impressive volume, crammed with information and good illustrations. What it *isn't*, though, is an encyclopedia. I have no objections to encyclopedias that are arranged in thematic rather than alphabetical order, so long as they are backed up by a comprehensive index.

Here, the indexer has been restricted to five pages – which is wholly inadequate for what purports to be a reference book.

Once you start browsing through it, though, it's hard to stop, and there's an awful lot to browse through too. It covers almost every branch of SF, beginning with a section on SF (and other) predictions that writers have made about their future.

There is then a long section of "timelines," in which important events in the history of SF are related both to each other and to world events. Some of the juxtapositions here are fascinating. 1926, for example, the year which saw the publication of Edgar Rice Burroughs' *The Moon Maid* – an

John Clute's enviable record at reference books continues with this illustrated guide to SF.

example of the kind of scientifically illiterate SF that fortunately has been left far behind us – also saw the release of Fritz Lang's technofantasy movie *Metropolis*, the founding by Hugo Gernsback of *Amazing Stories*, and, most ironic of all in the context of Burroughs' book, the launch by Robert Goddard of the world's first liquid-propelled rocket.

Further sections cover SF magazines, comics/illustrators/graphic novels and television. It's good to see that treatment of the latter two categories extends beyond work in the English language to deal also with Europe and Japan. However, I suspect that most of your browsing time will be spent in the sections on major authors, classic titles and cinema.

Clute is at his best in the section on major authors. There is no-one better in the world at pinpointing just what makes an author tick, and this is exactly what he does in over 100 short essays

From authors and aliens to first editions – Clute's book covers most aspects of science fiction.

on writers from Mary Shelley to Paul J McAuley. This is by far the most enjoyable part of the *Encyclopedia*. Elsewhere, there is a sense that Clute has been constrained for space.

The section on the movies is less pleasing. Individual entries tend to be about 25 words long, and provide only the most rudimentary of technical data. This is simply not enough space to permit a proper summary. A star system is used to indicate merit, and some of the judgements are bizarre: *Stargate*, for example, receives two stars, *Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey* and *Naked Lunch* only one.

Outside the essays on major authors and occasional discursive spreads on other subjects, this is a bitty book, which is, of course, partly what makes it such an excellent browse. It's hard to find a page bereft of some new and fascinating piece of information. However, the fragmentation is taken to extremes when it comes to the captions. These are often so perfunctory as to be virtually valueless (captions to artwork, for example, frequently omit the artist's name). Many illustrations therefore become mere uninformative decoration.

Despite all this carping, *SF: The Illustrated Encyclopedia* is a book full of many riches. If you want a reference tome, you should obviously go for the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* instead, but if you just want to wallow luxuriously in the genre, this will do fine.

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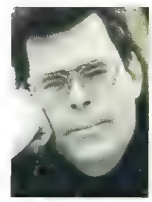


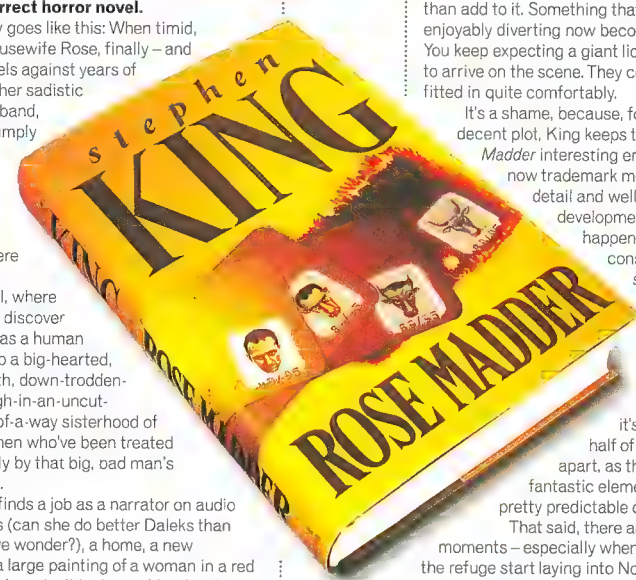
ROSE MADDER

Author: **Stephen King**
Publisher: **Hodder & Stoughton hardback**
Price/page count: **£16.99, 466pp**
ISBN: **0-340-64013-8**

Text: **Dave Golder**

So did Stephen King write *Delores Claiborne?* Or was it his wife? His *wife?* Well, that's what the rumours suggested. And with the release of *Rose Madder*, expect the rumours to start up again – it's so unashamedly right on when it comes to showing sisters doing it for themselves, it's hard not to suspect that Mrs King had some kind of creative influence. Either that, or King is just so ashamed to be writing in a genre that's often associated with misogyny that he's trying to make amends by writing a politically correct horror novel.

The story goes like this: When timid, subservient housewife Rose, finally – and suddenly – rebels against years of beatings from her sadistic policeman husband, Norman, she simply swipes his credit card and takes a bus to a city a few hundred miles away. There she lodges at a women's hostel, where she's helped to discover her true worth as a human being, thanks to a big-hearted, salt-of-the-Earth, down-trodden-but-proud, rough-in-an-uncut-diamond-kind-of-a-way sisterhood of really nice women who've been treated similarly harshly by that big, bad man's world out there.



The rumours that Mrs Stephen King "helps out" with some of her hubbie's books look set to surface once again.

She also finds a job as a narrator on audio cassette novels (can she do better Daleks than Jon Pertwee, we wonder?), a home, a new boyfriend and a large painting of a woman in a red dress. And the dress isn't just any old red – it's a particular shade of red called Rose Madder. And is it just Rose's imagination, or is the image of the woman slowly turning around? And why does she find dead leaves and crickets in her apartment, even though her windows are closed?

Meanwhile, back at the gore set-pieces, Norman is going mad – literally – trying to find out where his wife has disappeared to. He will stop at nothing to find her, and since he's a bit of a perv, some of the methods he employs aren't necessarily by the book. At least, I'm pretty sure that biting witnesses' penises off isn't in any standard constabulary's interrogation handbook...

And so, the book chugs on, alternating pretty unspectacularly between scenes of Rose enjoying her new life, and Norman, who's slowly closing in on his errant wife. When Rose's new boyfriend hears that her husband's name is Norman and asks, "As in Bates?", you hope it might be a hint that the plot will take a sudden, bizarre, Hitchcockian twist, but no such luck. A shame, really – because heroine Rose is a bit like a wetter version of Tess of D'Urbervilles, and the idea of her getting killed and the story taking off in a whole new direction, *Psycho*-style, could have been just what the book needed...

Eventually, a new direction *does* kick in – after a fashion. When the long-awaited fantasy side of the plot is finally introduced, the novel shifts from being a moderately interesting thriller into something akin to *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, with blood. But the fantasy elements are so unconvincingly grafted on, and – rare for King – so unrealistically written, that these forays into the unusual actually detract from the novel, rather than add to it. Something that had before been enjoyably diverting now becomes plainly ridiculous. You keep expecting a giant lion and talking badger to arrive on the scene. They certainly would have fitted in quite comfortably.

It's a shame, because, for all the lack of a decent plot, King keeps the first half of *Rose Madder* interesting enough, thanks to his now trademark meticulous attention to detail and well-crafted character development. Nothing much happens, sure, but the constant threat that something *will* happen compels you to read on. King himself has admitted that he has trouble with endings, but here it's the entire second half of the book that falls apart, as the story – for all its fantastic elements – grinds to a pretty predictable conclusion.

That said, there are some great moments – especially when the women from the refuge start laying into Norman, and he comes out of it worse. But while these scenes are fun, they do underline the fact that Norm is actually a bit of a crap villain. Sure, he does a lot of ranting, and chews up a few minor characters, but you're never in any doubt that Rose will come out on top. After all, if anything else happened it would betray the whole politically correct theme of the book.

But back to the real mystery: Did King's wife actually write *Rose Madder?* Personally, I doubt it. If she did, then he helped her out in a big way – all the old King writing tricks are present and correct, and the horror sequences are as lovingly detailed as ever (just wait for the bit where the coat hook... Nah, I won't spoil one of the few highlights for you). To be honest, I reckon it's just that King's getting a bit soft in his old age...

8

BLADE RUNNER 2: THE EDGE OF HUMAN

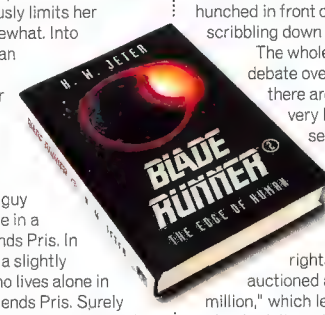
Author: **KW Jeter**
Publisher: **Orion hardback**
Price/page count: **£15.99, 384pp**
ISBN: **1-85798-265-7**
Strange whirring noise: **Philip K Dick's grave**

Text: **MJ Simpson**

Philip K Dick's original story is superior to this wannabe classic in every way.

The problem with any sequel to *Blade Runner* is that the original story comes to a natural end. A second novel set in the same world, perhaps featuring some minor characters from the film, might have worked, but this continuation of Deckard's story is a bad idea right from the start.

The book opens with Deckard and Rachael living in isolation away from the city. Because of her limited life-span, Deckard's lover spends most of the time in a stasis capsule, which prevents her from growing older, but simultaneously limits her conversational capability somewhat. Into this domestic bliss comes Saran Tyrell, heiress to the Tyrell Corporation, and the model for Rachael. In a separate story thread, we meet JF Sebastian, who is not dead, apparently.



Then it gets *very* odd...

JF Sebastian is a simple guy with a stammer who lives alone in a big empty building, and befriends Pris. In the original book, JR Isidore is a slightly simple guy with a stammer who lives alone in a big empty building, and befriends Pris. Surely they are one and the same? So what are they both doing in *Blade Runner 2?* The worlds of *Blade Runner* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* are totally incompatible, and to attempt to combine them like this means that the book ends up as a sequel to neither.

Of course, a dodgy plot might be forgiven if the book was well-written, but this is obviously just a film script that couldn't get made. There are long scenes full of dialogue, interspersed with "action" sequences, where Jeter's minimal knowledge of basic English escapes him completely (or maybe he just doesn't realise that stage directions and narrative are written differently?). There's no attempt at introspection or exploration of ideas; it certainly reads nothing like PK Dick. Several scenes are, in fact, *verbatim* descriptions of sequences from the movie – you can just see Jeter hunched in front of his video, pressing "Pause" and scribbling down a few more details.

The whole plot revolves around the worn debate over exactly how many replicants there are, and Jeter lays it all on with a very large trowel. There is a dreadful sequence, for example, in which Sarah shows Deckard secretly shot security footage of his first meeting with Bryant (i.e. clips from the original movie) Amazingly, Orion claim that rights for this book "have been auctioned around the world for $1.5 million," which leads one to suppose the buyers either hadn't read the manuscript, or thought any tat would sell if it was "the authorised sequel." Perhaps it will.

POCKET TREK

STAR TREK: FIRST FRONTIER

Author: **Diane Carey & Dr James I Kirkland**
Page count: **383 pp**
ISBN: **0-671-52045-8**

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION: Q SQUARED

Author: **Peter David**
Page count: **434pp**
ISBN: **0-671-89151-0**

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION: INTO THE NEBULA

Author: **Gene De Weese**
Page count: **274pp**
ISBN: **0-671-89453-6**

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE: THE LAERTIAN GAMBLE

Author: **Robert Sheckley**
Page count: **273pp**
ISBN: **0-671-88690-8**

STAR TREK: VOYAGER: VIOLATIONS

Author: **Susan Wright**
Page count: **279pp**
ISBN: **0-671-52046-6**

Publisher: **Pocket Books paperbacks**
Price: **£4.99 each**
Text: **Karen Levell**

Like the TV series they're based on, *Star Trek* novels vary wildly in terms of quality. There are currently over 150 *Star Trek* novels doing the rounds, and a good many of them are excellent. Some, however, aren't. This month's stack of novels show off this diversity extremely well, with perhaps the best and worst *Star Trek* novels ever penned gracing the release schedule.

The best comes in the form of Peter David's *Q Squared*. Originally published in hardback, this is an imaginative book, and shows off the author's fantastic understanding and knowledge of the *Star Trek* universe to good effect. Set aboard the Enterprise in three parallel universes, the story swings between the different timelines, detailing the crew members very distinct biographies in a highly convincing manner. Added to this intriguing mix are the characters of Q and the erstwhile Squire of Gothos, Trelane, who, in a fit of pique, taps a taboo source of power and shreds the barriers between the different universes, leading to a maelstrom of chaos and insanity that threatens the whole fabric of the universe. The characterisation is spot on, and David's handling of the dialogue is second-to-none. It's complex, pacy and gripping stuff, and easily the best of the bunch.

At the other end of the scale, though, we have ***The Laertian Gamble,*** which at best could be described as a waste of ink. The book stands at 273 pages with – get this – 73 chapters. Naturally, this means that around a quarter of the book is taken up with the half pages that introduce and end each chapter. Then there's the plot. Bashir, as usual thinking with his dangly end, agrees to gamble in Quark's bar on behalf of a beautiful alien, Allura, agreeing not to quit until either she or Quark is completely broke. As the story spins out, it seems that Bashir is incapable of losing, thanks to some never explained mathematical theory. As Quark is forced to raise the stakes against the unbeatable Bashir and Allura, he ends up losing virtually everything aboard Deep Space Nine, including huge sections of the station itself. Dax meanwhile, goes to Allura's homeworld, builds a chaos machine that even she doesn't understand and discovers the solution to the problem lies with some guy named Ken. She miraculously finds this guy, takes him to Deep Space Nine and – what do you know? – Allura instantly falls in love with him and decides to forego all her winnings to be with him. Pap.

The rest of the novels are simply average. ***First Frontier*** has Kirk punching it out with a dinosaur in a highly contrived but fun cross between classic *Trek* and *The Land that Time Forgot* (minus Raquel Welch's bosom). ***Into the Nebula*** sees another ecologically threatened planet (yawn), but in a fun twist, here it's actually Data's cat, Spot, who saves the day. The final offering, ***Violations,*** is a return to form for the *Voyager* series of books. Janeway and company beam aboard a bunch of aliens, who then kindly gas the crew and nick their main computer for their trouble. This is a well rounded story, involving the entire crew rather than simply concentrating on one or two characters.

Not galaxy-shattering stuff, to be sure, but then *Star Trek* novels aren't Joyce, are they?

THE SECRET OF THIS BOOK

Author: **Brian Aldiss**
Publishers: **HarperCollins hardback**
Price/page count: **£15.99, 333pp**
ISBN: **0-00-225364-X**

Text: **MJ Simpson**

This rather Zen title hides not Ambassador Kosh's *memoires*, but the 70th book from Brian Aldiss, who turned 70 himself in August. It's subtitled "20-Odd Stories," a typical Aldiss play on words, because some of the tales are *very* odd indeed.

Of course, Aldiss also writes mainstream novels, and only a few of these tales are SF/fantasy. In fact, only the previously unpublished "Travelling Towards Humbris" could be described as actual science fiction – although, admittedly there are SF elements to "Common Clay" (from *F&SF),* "Three Moon Enigmas" (from *Asimov's)* and "Horsemeat" (from *Interzone,* of which more later). Several are mere snippets of reality, albeit well-written, a couple are inspired by Shakespeare, while others are more personal reminiscences.

Among the more enjoyable are "Headless," an amusing little satire originally published in *The Daily Telegraph;* and a story of the afterlife, "Evans in his Moment of Glory." This previously unpublished tale of angels, "up-escalators" and a new attempt at creation is rather ironic, coming as it does from the man who coined the term "shaggy god stories" to describe just such SF reinterpretations of religion.

Let's cut to the chase here: "Horsemeat." When this was published in *Interzone* in 1992 it caused a riot, and it's easy to see why. There are some *very* unpleasant images described here, and the story doesn't really appear to go anywhere. It starts, a few things happen, then it stops, but what have we learned?

All the stories in *The Secret of this Book* are well-written and Aldiss' use of the English language is, as ever, a joy to behold. He can find and/or invent some great words, and indulges in wordplay with deft literary skill. The stories are linked by short pieces of prose which explain (or at least give clues to) the stories' origins, and these are enjoyable in themselves – sometimes, strangely enough, more so than the actual tales into which they're inserted.

Don't come to this book expecting a neat package of SF stories, though, because this isn't that at all. Quite frankly, I'm not sure what it is, except "20-odd stories." The main recurring problem with the compilation, in fact, is that many of the stories are rather inconsequential, mere snippets of observation...

And what exactly is the "secret" of this book? Well, I think I've worked it out, but I could be wrong...

"20 odd stories" pretty much sums this compilation of Aldiss material up. They're *very* odd, in fact...

THE GARDEN OF UNEARTHLY DELIGHTS

Author: **Robert Rankin**
Publisher: **Doubleday hardback**
Price/page count: **£14.99, 253pp**
ISBN: **0-385-40515-4**

Text: **MJ Simpson**

This is a bit of a departure for the Rankin lad. A whole novel, and hardly a mention of Pooley or O'Malley! In fact, apart from a passing reference to Lazlo Woodbine, Rankin's fondness for running gags and in-jokes seems to have largely disappeared. Fortunately, his off-beat sense of humour remains...

Garden... introduces us to Max Carrion, Imagineer, who one day receives "the Queen's Award to Industry award (award)." This is odd, as he is the least industrious person he knows. This award is either the cause, or a symptom, of a reality shift, which throws Max into his favourite reading matter, and then into the future.

In this future state, magic has replaced technology and the world is a curious mixture of the post-apocalyptic, pseudo-medieval and downright bloody weird. Max attempts to reintroduce the concept of advertising, and then finds himself forced to recover a stolen automaton for the local tyrant.

Don't worry, this isn't some dreadful sub-Tolkein "quest"; it's a surreal, dream-like story in which things are liable to change at any time, and for no apparent reason. There's a hint of Sheckley in here, maybe a touch of PK Dick, and plenty of Rankin. He's working hard at moving in a new direction, but fortunately without losing his stylistic idiosyncrasies.

Ah, but does it work? Yes and, unsurprisingly, no. It's an improvement over his last few books, but can't match the greatness of the *Armageddon* trilogy. For some reason, Barry the time-sprout and Elvis had a depth of character that Hugo Rune, Max Carrion, *et al* can't quite attain. Sure, it's the peripheral aspects of Rankin's stories that entertain and intrigue, and *Garden...* is as strong as any book in this respect, but the core story is still perilously close to being a stream of (semi-)consciousness.

It's the snappy dialogue, literary self-referentiality and old jokes that make a Rankin book worth reading, and in that respect I'm increasingly of the opinion he should be moving into other media. *The Garden of Unearthly Delights,* it seems, would be brilliant as a comic. As a book it's merely good.

JUDGE DREDD: THE MEGA HISTORY

Authors: **Colin M Jarman and Pete Acton**
Publisher: **Lennard Publishing**
Price/page count: **£12.99, 148pp**
ISBN: **1-85291-128-X**

Text: **Matt Bielby**

Of all the *Judge Dredd* orientated books published this Summer to tie in with the movie, this is far and away the best. The reason's simple: It has hardly anything to do with the film at all. Instead, it's a history of the *Judge Dredd* comic strip, detailing the character's development from near-future *Dirty Harry* knock-off to "the most significant character in modern British comics."

A good-looking, glossy thing, the authors – who previously wrote a *Roy of the Rover* book – clearly know what's good and interesting about *Dredd,* and make most of the right calls when picking their material (though, oddly, a handful of significant stories fail to get much of a mention, notably "The City of the Damned" and the Grant Morrison/Mark Millar-scripted epic "Inferno," nor do the "funny" one-and-two parters that made up much of the strip's run). It helps that Jarman and Acton have clearly spoken to most of the people involved, artists like Carlos Ezquerra, Brian Bolland and Mike McMahon, and writers Pat Mills and Alan Grant, at some length too.

There are faults. The notoriously interview-shy John Wagner, writer of the *Dredd* strip for most of its 18 year history, only agreed to see the authors at the eleventh hour - and then, apparently, for a mere 45 minutes – and it shows. His contributions are hopelessly unrevealing - Wagner's explanation of the period in the mid-'80s, when he appeared to be about to redefine the until-then stoic, almost two-dimensional, Dredd character, amount to "It was an experiment, but I didn't like it... If you change a character you're in danger of losing it altogether." Deeply unsatisfying. Instead, we learn a lot more about comic writer and *2000AD* creator Pat Mills' struggles to get *Dredd's* parent comic off the ground, and about initial artist Carlos Ezquerra's nose getting knocked out of joint when one of his stories failed to be the first one published – all interesting stuff, but as much to do with the internal politics of publishing companies as the *Dredd* strip itself. Only once do we get to see what any of the creators look like either, despite being in their company for the length of the book.

Still, I had fun with this, and read it in one sitting too. And Brian Bolland's early sketches for the *Dark Judges* are almost worth the cover price alone...

A fine overview of the *Dredd* phenomena, for fans and newcomers to Mega City One.

Alan Hughes

The month in BOOKS

HARD, SOFT, AND PAPERBACKS REVIEWED, PLUS FANTASY AND SF BOOKS ON THE WAY, AND THE CURRENT BESTSELLERS.

DJINN RUMMY

Author: **Tom Holt**
Publisher: **Orbit hardback**
Price/page count: **£15.99, 277pp**
ISBN: **1-85723-329-8**
Text: **Cavan Scott**

Jane has decided to end it all. She has chosen a suitably depressing train station, and bought the bottle of aspirins that will help her shuffle off this mortal coil. However, what she isn't expecting – but then who would? – is an all-powerful genie, who she unintentionally releases when the time comes to do the deed.

Jane and the Genie, who goes by the name of Kiss, thereafter find themselves facing love, death and interior decorating in a world where genies operate by commercial sponsorship, and flying carpets display serious attitude problems. This is – in case you hadn't worked it out yet – one of those books that'll have you grinning and giggling until everyone in the train carriage is staring at you.

Okay, the plot is wafer thin, but this can be easily forgiven – it's not about a story as such anyway, but rather a series of delightful set-pieces woven together. Such gems include Cupid transformed into a rifle-wielding hitman, and a nuclear warhead which has to cope with the attentions of a randy magic rug. Yes, it's silly – but I loved it.

Tom Holt must get fed up of being compared to Adams, Pratchett – or even *Monty Python* – but the similarities are obvious. His characters are dripping with wit, and the situations resolutely off-the-wall. *Djinn Rummy* is pure entertainment, nothing more, nothing less. Holt is simply funny without ever trying to be too clever, and as such comes recommended.

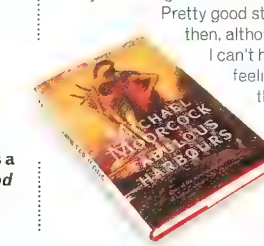
B+

FABULOUS HARBOURS

Author: **Michael Moorcock**
Publisher: **Millennium hardback**
Price/page count: **£15.99, 193pp**
ISBN: **1-85798-408-0**
Text: **John Waggott**

Although its title suggests a sequel to Moorcock's *Blood – A Southern Fantasy*, *Fabulous Harbours* can be quite comfortably read as a stand-alone collection of loosely linked short stories. Virtually all of them have appeared in print before, but only the most avid Moorcock completist will have read the lot, seeing as they originally cropped up in magazines ranging from *The New Statesman* to *The Time Centre Times*.

Using an old trick, Moorcock claims these are stories related to him by another person, in this case one Edwin Begg. The tales themselves are narrated by characters from within the Moorcock multiverse, with familiar names from the Von Bek dynasty, as well as Jerry Cornelius, turning up. The tales are a pretty diverse bunch, ranging from crime stories like "The Affair of Seven Virgins" and "The Girl Who Killed Sylva Blade" – tales which I surprised myself by liking – to good old Moorcockian Law and Chaos stuff like "The Black Blade's Summoning," and more from Cornelius and his family in the story "The Enigma Windows."



Pretty good stuff, then, although I can't help feeling that

A CALCULATED MAGIC

Author: **Robert Weinberg**
Publisher: **Raven paperback**
Price/page count: **£4.99, 234pp**
ISBN: **1-85487-350-4**
Text: **David Langford**

The main problem with most humourous fantasy is that it simply isn't funny. Still, Robert Weinberg mixes a batch of dotty notions here. There's a stolen phial of lethal anthrax spores, the Babylonian plague-god Nergal, the Old Man of the Mountains, an indestructible genie, Loki and the Furies themselves – currently employed by the KGB. Naturally, the showdown with this crowd takes place in that eldritch realm of total unreality: Las Vegas.

These supernatural menaces are forced into being (and therefore defined) by human belief – villains, for example, always gloat at length and thus give you a chance to wriggle free of your bonds, because that's how it "really" happens in the movies.

Our likeable hero is a "Logical Magician," supposedly confronting the bad guys armed only with a knowledge of mathematical logic (homage to de Camp's and Pratt's 1941 *The Incomplete Enchanter*). This promises clever twists, but the maths is a letdown: The Sphinx knows Bertrand Russell's 20th-century paradoxes, but still falls for one that are 24 centuries old? And the Klein-bottle genie-trap doesn't actually make sense... Meanwhile, the hero has just too many helpers: Witch, dwarf artificer, Amazon weapons-mistress, Odin's ravens, a full set of Valkyries, Merlin, etc. The problem with *A Calculated Magic* is the rescuing cavalry always comes over the hill just a little too soon.

Weinberg's story sizzles along well enough (except when he pauses, repeatedly, to describe incredibly sexy female outfits in skintight Lycra), but it's never quite as suspenseful or mirthful as advertised.

C+

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO THE BEST OF EASTERN HEROES

B

Authors: **Rick Baker, Toby Russell**
Edited by: **Lisa Tilston**
Publisher: **Eastern Heroes Publications**
Price/page count: **£7.99, 140pp**
ISBN: **1-89-925201-0**

HONG KONG ACTION CINEMA

A

Author: **Bey Logan**
Publisher: **Titan**
Price/page count: **£14.99, 192pp**
ISBN: **1-85286-7**
Text: **Jeremy Clarke**

Forget Tarantino. He learnt everything – *everything* – from Woo. Or so they say. Yep, Hong Kong cinema is the latest in-thing for the movie-appreciating elite.

Charting the rise in popularity of Hong Kong cinema in the West over the past few years has been the magazine *Eastern Heroes*. *The Essential Guide to the Best of Eastern Heroes* is a collection of articles from the mag, which covers every commercial Hong Kong genre imaginable, and the fantasy epic is more than adequately represented.

Key producer/director Tsui Hark, who almost single-handedly introduced complex Western-style special effects to Hong Kong cinema through his seminal *Zu Warriors*, receives numerous pages, while an interview with *Ghost Story*'s director, the legendary Ching Siu Tung, explores his extensive career choreographing action and directing fight scenes. Further interviews feature leading ladies Michiko Nishiwari (*Magic Cop*'s dragon lady), Cynthia Khan (heroine of *13 Cold Blooded Eagles*), and Jade Leung (the eponymous heroine in *Black Cat*, a Hong Kong *Nikita* remake).

Eastern Heroes contributor Logan, meanwhile, has spent considerable time and energy researching *Hong Kong Action Movies*, which charts the development of Hong Kong cinema from Peking Opera and Oriental silents through kung fu classics and Shaw Brothers epics into more familiar territory. Amidst extensive coverage of such figures as Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Samo Hung and John Woo is an excellent chapter on Chinese Ghost Stories. To Logan's credit, he explores such unlikely precursors as Hammer's Oriental outing *The Legend of the Seven Golden Vampires*, and isn't afraid to suggest that *Rouge* proves the Hong Kong supernatural actioneer could run the whole gamut from Henry James to George Romero.

His acknowledgement of the debt owed to these movies by the likes of Sam Raimi's *Army of Darkness* makes Logan's study hugely accessible to the newcomer, even as it packs in observations shrewd enough to enlighten even the most knowledgeable Hong Kong action movie buff, and, as such, makes a welcome addition to the reference shelf.

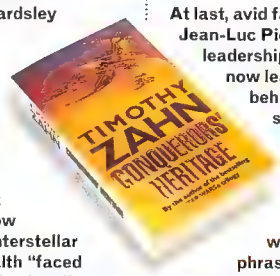
trying to link all these stories together may well have been a mistake – aside from the link sequences themselves they really seem to have very little in common at all.

Fabulous Harbours is an enjoyable read, but you really need to be pretty au fait with the Moorcock multiverse to get the most out of it.

B

Conquerors' Heritage

Author: **Timothy Zahn**
Publisher: **Bantam Books paperback**
Price/page count: **£4.99, 360pp**
ISBN: **0-553-40854-2**
Text: **Paul Beardsley**



According to the cover blurb, this is a sequel to Zahn's *Conquerors' Pride*, a book which told how humanity's interstellar Commonwealth "faced savage invasion by alien starships of unknown origin." In this book we get to hear the aliens' side of the story.

The aliens, called the Zhirrzh, are never fully described – but appear to be roughly humanoid, with tails, long tongues and a removable organ called a fsss which enables individuals to live on in a ghostlike state – Eldership – after death.

Despite this, and the fact that the blurb promises "one of the most powerful evocations of an alien society ever created," there's little that's really alien about the Zhirrzh. So little, in fact, that I wondered briefly – if Zahn was trying to make a point. But, no, he's simply gone for the cop-out approach of replacing the familiar with the obscure. "Minute," "day," "kilometre" and "afternoon," for instance, are needlessly changed to "hunbeat," "fullarc," "thoustride" and "postmidarc." Character names include Dkll-kumvit, Cvv-panav, Prr't-casst-a and Chrr't-ogdano; presumably some consider such names evocative rather than stupid.

Nevertheless, *Conqueror's Heritage* is an engaging space opera if you can get past the incomprehensible first chapter. Why, you find yourself asking, do the Zhirrzh and the humans both insist the other side started the conflict? What does the superweapon CIRCE do, and can the humans be prevented from using it? Will the disgraced hero Thrr-gilag redeem himself, or will he continue to add to his list of well-meant mistakes?

And will there be another book from Timothy Zahn to answer all the questions not answered in this?

C

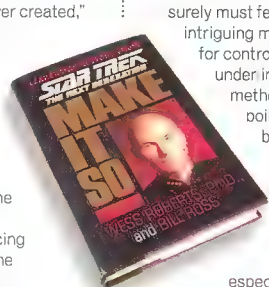
Make It So

Authors: **Weiss Roberts PhD, Bill Ross**
Publisher: **Pocket Books hardback**
Price/page count: **£15.99/242pp**
ISBN: **0-671-52097-0**
Text: **Nick Peers**

At last, avid fans of Captain Jean-Luc Picard's leadership skills can now learn the secrets behind his success. You too can enlighten and inspire your workmates with such phrases as "Make it so," and, er, "Engage" (while gesturing towards a large blue screen).

Following an introduction to the character of Picard, the main section of the book features nine synopses of *The Next Generation*'s most powerful episodes, complete with lessons and notes allegedly made by Picard for the benefit of Starfleet Academy students.

Make It So is effectively the sequel to *Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun*, which not only sounds more interesting, but surely must feature a more intriguing methodology for controlling underlings? Picard's method seems to boil down to "firm but fair," which probably doesn't need a whole book to explain – especially when such a tiny number of episodes (nine from the 178 they filmed, remember!) are drawn upon.



Although *Make It So* is entertaining in places, it's a bit of a rip-off when you consider that the bulk of the thing is concerned with summarising each episode, with just a few pages put aside to inform you about leadership. Had it drawn from a broader cross-section of *The Next Generation*, things would have been considerably better. Then again, surely just watching the show itself would give you more insight into the leadership skills of Picard?

C+

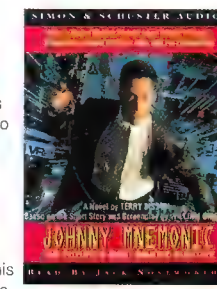
Johnny Mnemonic Script Book

Author: **William Gibson**
Publisher: **Harper Collins**
Price/page count: **£9.99 pb, £14.99 hardback/164pp**
ISBN: **000-648-0454; 000-224-618X**
Text: **Jim Swallow**

It's hard to believe, but the original *Johnny* short story was first published in *Omni* way back in 1981. Now, 14 years on, we find Prince of Slackers Keanu Reeves teaming up with Ice-T, Beat Takeshi and Dolph Lundgren in a neo-cyberpunk big screen version of '80s SF wunderkind William Gibson's seminal short story.

It's taken Hollywood a long time to catch on to the so-called Mirrorshades movement, which started in literary SF, but now a glut of cyberspace movies are on the way – *The Net*, *Hackers*, *Strange Days* and, indeed, *Johnny Mnemonic*.

HarperCollins' tie-in release, along with the novelisation of the movie (a novel of a movie of a short story – bizarre), is this odd double-header of a tome, containing both Gibson's screenplay and the original short story in a kind of compare-and-contrast kit. The script's presentation is clear and crisp, devoid of the technical notations of real scripts, and thus easily readable to the uninitiated. It's also, essentially, dry and colourless – hardly classic Gibson. No, his strength lies in his descriptive scene-setting and emotive sensory textures, both of which are lost in a bare bones screenplay. As a fiction writer, Gibson himself commented how tough it was to distill a story so detailed into the mere words and actions required by moviemakers, and his script shows this well. The odd clever turn of phrase or narrative flourish does shine, true enough, but in the end the script serves only to highlight just how superior the short story is that inspired it.



Debating further the differences between the movie and the story is best left to film reviewers, but I would note that most readers would be wise to read the short story before the script – it's the best bit of the book, after all. Otherwise, the scattered black and white shots vary in clarity and quality, and seem something of an afterthought, although a more promising 16-page colour photo section is to be added to the UK version. There's no credit listing either, rather mysteriously.

B-

Bride of the Rat God

Author: **Barbara Hambly**
Publisher: **Raven paperback**
Price/page count: **£4.99, 336pp**
ISBN: **1 85487 418 7**
Text: **David Langford**

Barbara Hambly puts together her fantasies with the elusively reliable magic of a master chef. The ingredients look all too familiar, the recipe seems perfectly standard, but when she uncovers the dish it's a gourmet treat that sends her fast-food rivals into paroxysms of jealousy.

The formula this time could hardly be more nackneyed – the cursed Chinese necklace whose female wearer is doomed to a sticky end as (you guessed it) the Bride of the Rat God. Just to add to the unreality, the story is set in 1923 Hollywood – with the Rat God stalking languorous megastar Chrysanda Flamande as she acts, or rather fails to act, in a magnificently tacky Biblical epic.

A slow-seeming start lays groundwork for a solidly constructed, well-researched narrative with real characters that you soon come to care about. The true heroine is the star's sister-in-law Norah, who has a jaundiced, common-sensical but affectionate view of Christine (no-one is really called Chrysanda) and her fur coats, exotic poses, cocaine, lovers, yapping Pekinese dogs, etc. Meanwhile, in Chinatown, Los Angeles, wizardry is not dead...

It builds from mere unease, through bad luck, nasty accidents and seemingly incidental murders (but just what were those toothmarks on the outer walls?), to full-blooded encounters with walking corpses, animated horrors from the La Brea tar pits, and worse. Can ancient Oriental wisdom be combined with 1920s' state-of-the-art movie technology to defeat the Rat God? Not without help from those all-important Pekinese... Unputdownable entertainment.

A-

Rim: A Novel of Virtual Reality

Author: **Alexander Besher**
Publisher: **Orbit paperback**
Price/page count: **£6.99, 357pp**
ISBN: **1-85723-332-8**
Text: **David Langford**

This novel was short-listed for the Philip K Dick award – and it's not surprising. Besher's book scrambles real and unreal places like a post-cyberpunk version of Dick himself.

Here, virtual reality interfaces with gooey New Age stuff (or, from another viewpoint, ancient Oriental teachings) about inner spiritual control. The mysteries of "ch'i" energy can blow the heads off killer droids, or download the personality from a human brain without wires or modems. Gosh...

But that's small stuff. In 2027, Neo-Tokyo itself has been digitised, and regularly goes off-line by vanishing from ordinary geography. Another city is wholly virtual and has crashed, trapping countless VR-gaming kids in a crumbling cyber-wasteland threatened by viral Tibetan zombies. Can it be rebooted in time?

Besher has a genuinely deranged imagination. To confirm that the psychic detective hero is skillful enough to interrogate the newly dead, someone checks by using ouija board. A space habitat offers a daft freefall golf course, where you hit the balls into simulated black holes. The Tantrix 4.2 VR operating system (password: Om Mani Padme Aum) outdoes reality and runs on a prayer wheel. And you can order interactive karmic sushi.

Read *Rim: A Novel of Virtual Reality*, and feel your brains turn to tasty sushi in real time!

B

TekPower

Author: **William Shatner**
Publisher: **Pocket paperback**
Price/page count: **£4.99, 220pp**
ISBN: **0-671-85457-7**
Text: **Andy Stout**

You might well suspect that a book is going to be bad. And you might well harbour suspicions that the plot will be ridiculous, the writing appalling and the characterisation something that would fit on the back of a cornflakes packet. But for it to actually sink below your lowest expectations is something of an achievement.

What happens is this: Someone gets murdered and Jake Cardigan and his redoubtable partner Sid Gomez set out to solve the crime. Questioning one person leads to another, and another, across the USA and down into Nicaragua. Eventually, the two sleuths uncover a plot, backed by the TekLords, to replace the US President with an android.

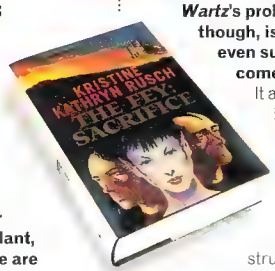
Given the series' current track record, *TekPower* looks likely to be an improvement on previous outings. But it isn't. In fact, it's complete cobblers. *TekPower* is a badly written detective story substituting Tek for cocaine and dropping in the occasional hologram and phrases like "he sipped at his nearcaf" to make you think it's a couple of centuries hence.

Ridiculous, moronic and impressively dull, even for Shatner's career this is a dazzling nadir. Less of a book, more of a waste of a good tree.

D-

The Fey: Sacrifice

Author: **Kristine Kathryn Rusch**
Publisher: **Millennium hardback**
Price/page count: **£16.99, 550pp**
ISBN: **1 85798 270 3**
Text: **David Langford**



Another fat fantasy apparently opening a fat trilogy. Kristine Kathryn Rusch usually gives her material a new slant, though, and there are many striking ideas scattered through this tale of a sleepy island beset by invading hordes.

The Fey are the invaders, empire-building sadists who have a near-monopoly of this fantasy world's magic. Their talent comes in specialist flavours: some Fey eat your soul and steal your body, while others are shape-shifters, weather-workers, prophets, creators of magical camouflage, or able to flay victims with their touch.

Meanwhile the farmers and craftspeople of Blue Isle seem helpless to fight back once their protecting sea-hazards are bypassed by magically steered Fey ships. But, against all the invaders' nasty arts of death, the Blue Islanders have one unexpected weapon which is also the heart of their religion. Its use is devastating, but raises tortuous issues of morality: A holy sacrament that hits like a napalm attack.

The resulting armed stalemate is threatened by further complications: Traps, betrayals, infiltrations, an ultimate dodgy compromise. Despite skipping over awkward periods of time (a full year at one point), the story seems over-long and over-detailed. Perhaps it wouldn't have if the narrative point of view didn't keep hopping, blockbuster-fashion, all over the place, and if more of the characters were likeable. It's hard to empathize with the chilly Fey viewpoint from which so much of the story is told. Still, plenty of excitement.

B-

Star Wartz

Author: **Patrick Tilley**
Publisher: **Orbit hardback**
Price/page count: **£15.99, 409pp**
ISBN: **1-85723-319-0**
Text: **Andy Stout**

With *The Amtrak Wars*, Patrick Tilley produced one of the best SF adventure series of the '80s, so even what looks like lightweight comedy should be treated with some respect. *Star Wartz*'s problem, though, is that it isn't even sure it is a comedy.

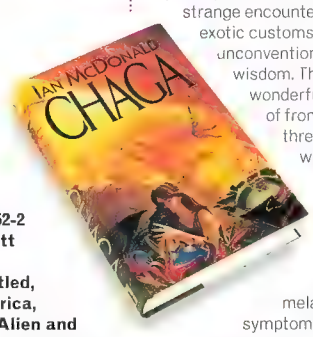
It all starts irreverently enough. Andrew Webber is an ex-SAS man turned struggling freelance journalist whose curiosity is piqued when he receives some junk mail inviting him to register in the galactic fax directory. Lured into a matter transmitter, he suddenly finds himself in the Rimworld – a string of 1,000 plus planets following the same orbital path around a binary star system – and in the hands of corporate raider Constantine Parnassus. It turns out rather a lot of this Earth/Rimworld traffic goes on, and Webber is rather quickly thrust into a plot brimming with conspiracy theories, violent action and wheels within wheels.

All well and good, but the plot then develops labyrinthine twists, the comic metaphor quotient dives downwards and suddenly you're in the midst of an (almost) straight adventure story. Unfortunately, a lot of the premises were established when the book was going just for the laughs, and carrying these strands through jars badly with Tilley's later attempts to torque the tension.

In short, it doesn't work too well. As a straight SF story, it would have been passable, but Tilley's comedic writing is on the laboured side, and rather than bridge the gap between the two styles, he often falls down the chasm between.

C

Chaga

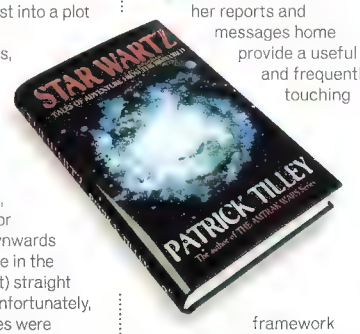


Author: **Ian McDonald**
Publisher: **Gollancz**
Price/page count: **£16.99/ 413pp**
ISBN: **0-575-06052-2**
Text: **Dan Abnett**

***Chaga* is subtitled, "A Novel of Africa, Ambition, the Alien and Football" – an eclectic mix by anybody's standards. McDonald takes delight in mixing up the most unlikely fictional cocktails, but thankfully he has the verve and consummate skill to ensure they are always delicious. Publisher Gollancz has trailed *Chaga* as his most, "powerful novel to date" and loathe as I am to go along with flyleaf blurbs, they are very probably right.**

Chaga is a novel about landscape and change. Deposits of alien flora have fallen to earth, and are beginning to spread and grow from their point of landing in Africa, transmuting the land into a perplexing foreign territory. The growth, inexorable and complex, swallows everything it touches. It is named "Chaga" after the first of the African tribes it overwhelms, and it look like nothing will be able to stop it engulfing the entire world.

The focal character is Gaby McAslan, a young journalist from County Antrim who sets off on an odyssey to find, explore, witness and understand the new landscape that is infecting Earth. Gaby is likeable and resolute, and her reports and messages home provide a useful framework and frequently touching for the narrative.



McDonald fluidly takes her, and us, from the reassuring comfort of a recognisable European starting point, into the alien territory of Africa and beyond, into a realm that's ultra-foreign and breathtakingly bizarre.

This double layer of the unknown, first Africa itself and then the Chaga, steadily loosens our grip on the familiar and the expected, and Gaby's journey becomes a collage of strange encounters, exotic customs and unconventional wisdom. There is a wonderful sense of frontier, of a threshold where people display the kind of achingly melancholic symptoms of superstition, camaraderie, affection and reckless purpose that attend any great watershed in human affairs. A pervading quality of magic realism and otherness dominates this frontier, and McDonald captures beautifully, and effortlessly, the sense of epiphany, of self-knowing at the brink of the extraordinary.

And there is the threat, silent and almost invisible, but becoming chilly and palpable as the book progresses. One becomes disquieted by rumours, by hints of what is over the next mountain range.

Chaga is truly original and literally wonderful. As usual McDonald's prose scintillates as it weaves its captivating course. He has a wicked way with words. And the denouement is simply stunning. All this and football too.

A

Coming soon

Maskerade
Terry Pratchett, Transworld **Oct**
Granny Weatherwax and Nanny Ogg return in the latest visit to the Discworld, seeking a replacement for Magrat Garlick. They find Agnes Nitt, but she has found... the operal

Starborne
Robert Silverberg, Voyager **2 Oct**
A galactic odyssey of epic proportions, *Starborne* is, according the publisher, "The biggest story of Silverberg's career, destined to propel him into the ranks of SF's elite." But isn't he there already?

The Merlin Chronicles
Edited by Mike Ashley, Raven **3 Oct**
An impressive-looking anthology of never-read-before short Arthurian stories by top authors including Marion Zimmer Bradley, Charles de Lint and Tanith Lee.

Doctor Who Companions
David J Howe and Mark Stammers, Virgin **19 Oct**
From Susan Foreman to Ace, this is the complete guide to every travelling companion who's ever travelled the pathways of time with the Doctor. With lots of exclusive photos and never-seen-before original BBC character outlines, it should be the perfect Whovian stocking filler this Christmas. (That's a non-too subtle hint there, by the way.)

Sixty Years of the World's Favourite Comic Book Heroes
Les Daniels, Virgin **2 Nov**
More of coffee table tome than a detailed history, this lavishly illustrated 110-page overview of DC superheroes promises to be packed with illustrations from the greatest moments in the publisher's history.

Best-selling SF Books

Fantasy reclaims the top slots

Fantasy veterans top the charts this month, with David Eddings (and wife) at number one with their prequel to *The Belgariad*, closely followed by the venerable Ms McCaffrey's latest trip to Pern. David Weber's most recent adventure for his sword-wielding space-babe Honor Harrington makes it to number three, while the only title surviving from last month's list is WJ Palmer's self-published ***Minds of the Empire.***

The Forbidden Planet SF Book Chart

1. **Belgarath the Sorceror** David and Leigh Eddings (HarperCollins)
2. **Dolphins of Pern Anne** McCaffrey (Transworld)
3. **Honor Harrington: Flag in Exile** David Weber (Baen)
4. **The Diamond Age** Neal Stephenson (Viking)
5. **Life Form** Alan Dean Foster (Ace)
6. **Bastard Prince** Katherine Kurtz (Del Rey)
7. **Quantum Leap** Odyssey Barbara Walton (Boxtree)
8. **Minds of the Empire** Warren James Palmer (Ripping)
9. **Fairyland** Paul J McAuley (Gollancz)
10. **Whit** Iain Banks (Little, Brown)

'The best of the post-Stephen King fantasists'

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PAN

If you thought all videogame magazines were the same...

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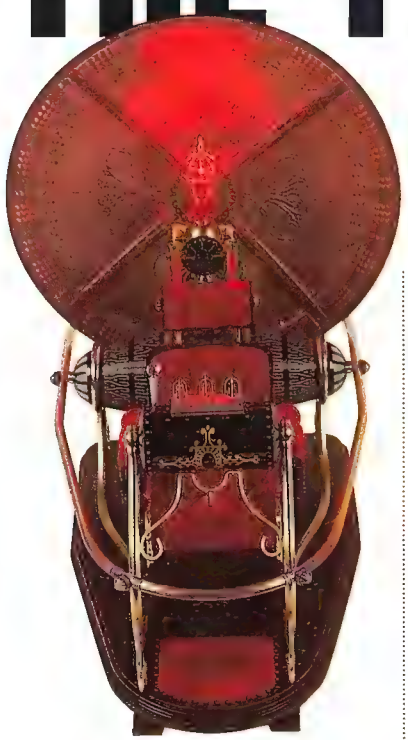
"The company's aim, according to co-founder, Brian Glassar, is to 'combine high technology and precision engineering with a jeweller's craftsmanship.'"

THE TIME MACHINE



We've had HG Wells stamps and an HG Wells conference. Now, however, comes the most impressive centenary celebration of The Time Machine yet...

HG Wells' *The Time Machine*, first published 100 years ago this year, is one of *the* landmarks of science fiction. Generally thought of as the first "hard" science fiction novel – *Frankenstein*, regarded since Aldiss as the first SF novel, is more "science fantasy" – it contains some of the most striking SF images ever conceived, not least the Time Machine itself. A beautiful brass-and-copper Victorian contraption, it's been depicted numerous times, but never more strikingly than in George Pal's classic 1960 film. Everyone here in the SFX office has wanted to own one for yonks. And now, perhaps, some of us can...

This gorgeous model is the first production from Aberdeen's Granite City Mechanician, a company founded by Brian Glassar, a university lecturer in three-dimensional design, and George Chaides, a pilot/technician of remote-operated submarines, more used to working off North Sea oil rigs than manufacturing models. Their new company has positioned itself at the high end of the market – the models are handmade, editions are limited, and the aim, according to Brian, is to "combine high technology and precision engineering with a jeweller's craftsmanship."

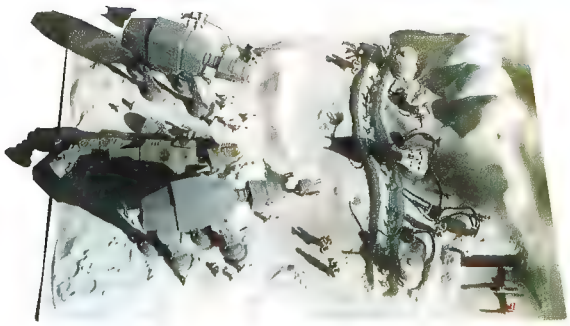
Precision is certainly the name of the game with this first model. Licensed from Turner Home Entertainment, it's extremely faithful to the George Pal version, with the measurements taken directly from the original props. It's built to 1/12th scale, which works out at 10.5" long by 10.5" tall by 8.5", and gives it a 7.5" diameter copper dish. The railings are made of brass, the base of Swiss pearwood, the motor housing and chair of white metal alloy, and it's decorated with 21 lights. There's even a microprocessor on board, there to control the complex light sequence, which reproduces the one seen in the film, and implement various mechanical operations. In fact, this Time Machine can do everything Wells' did – except, naturally enough, travel backwards and forwards through time!

Granite City Mechanician has created a stunningly faithful small-scale version of the George Pal Time Machine.

So far, over 40 Time Machine models have been ordered by collectors all over the world. If you're interested in finding out more, or ordering one, send an SAE to George at the address above. Be warned, though, they're *not* cheap – coming in at around *£3,000* each! But then this isn't yer average vinyl model, is it? Rest assured, if we got paid more here at SFX, there'd be a few cheques winging their way to Aberdeen right about now... ☎

Manufacturer: **Granite City Mechanician**
Price: **You'd better ask George...**
Contact: **Granite City Mechanician Ltd, c/o George Chaides, 113 Western Road, Aberdeen AB2 2LU, Scotland ☎ (01224) 485308**

Text: **Matt Bielby**



If you choose your paints carefully, this reisssued kit from Amt/Ertl can end up looking excellent.

WAR ON HOTH

Manufacturer: **AMT/Ertl**
Price: **£13.99**
Contact: **Any good toy/model shop**

Text: **Mike Reccia**

Remember that scene from *The Empire Strikes Back*, where the giant Imperial "walkers" march on the Rebel stronghold on Hoth? The whole thing is an sfx showcase, featuring the aforementioned stop-motion AT-AT walkers (All Terrain Armoured Transports), plus snowspeeders, scout walkers, laser cannons and a full cast of Rebel troops and Imperial stormtroopers. Knockout on-screen, but impossible to reproduce as a kit. Or so you'd think.

Hot on the heels of the film's release in 1980, kitmakers AMT/Ertl delivered an "action scene" model based on the aforementioned sequence. Unavailable for some time, this unusual package has just been re-released under superior box art, bringing SF modellers a 17½" x 12½" white vacu-form moulded snow-scene base, complete with tiny injection moulded figures and craft. Three Imperial walkers are included – two advancing on the Rebel trench (moulded into the base), the other pummelled and prostrate with a broken leg. The curious two-man scout walker is also included, plus three Rebel snowspeeders and Luke Skywalker's X-Wing. Add to these three Rebel laser cannons, two Rebel "satellite dishes," four Rebel soldiers astride "taun-tauns" and tiny troops from both armies and you have the basis for an unusual mini-diorama.

The kit assembles quickly and easily. All craft are snap-fix affairs – a blob of superglue is all that's required – which can then be easily primed. The snow base benefits from blue acrylic car paint sprayed into crevices and folds in the ice, followed by an overdusting of white. The walkers, which should be sprayed a car primer grey, need to be subtly weathered with graphite, then overpainted with lighter and darker greys to give an impression of size. Dry-brushed streaks of rust and dirt add weight to the laser cannon turrets, while graphite (soft pencil lead) smeared on the snowspeeders and X-Wing with a finger brings out the panel detail. For added realism, I "crashed" one of the snowspeeders into the "snow" by burying its front half in fine surface Polyfilla, which I painted with white acrylic to simulate snow. I also attached a snowspeeder via an arc of wire to one of the walkers, to mimic the hobbling scene from the film. The tiny troopers are fiddly, though, so I found it much better to paint them once they'd been stuck to the base.

Purists will note that some of the craft and figures are not to scale, but had AMT/Ertl stuck to the original proportions, the troops would have been too tiny to work with. The overall effect looks right, and that's what counts.

You get three AT-ATs with the Hoth set – two are standing, but one has been downed by the Rebel snowspeeders.

The month in TOYS & MODELS

More of the most impressive new toy and model releases to hit the shelves, plus coming soon, edited by **Mike Reccia** of Sci-Fi & Fantasy Models magazine.

Recent releases

Along with the Batboat and Batwing, the Batmobile is great value at just under £13.

REVELL FOREVER!

Manufacturer: **Revell**
Price: **Batmobile, Batboat, Batwing, £12.95 each; Batman vinyl figure, £24.95.**
Contact: **Any good toy/model shop**

Hot on the heels of the new Batman movie come three kits based on the hardware used in the film, plus a figure of Bats himself. Redesigned for *Batman Forever*, the '40s-esque skeletal Batmobile, Batwing and Batboat have been reproduced in miniature by Revell as beautifully detailed injection-moulded kits, with breathtaking box art.

Each model includes chrome-plated parts to represent the "innards" of the craft – the bits that can be seen between the ribs of the hardware in the movie. It's suggested in the instructions that these look better dirtied down with drybrushed black paint. In the film, however, all the vehicles have a blue neon look to their engine parts, and you can achieve a strikingly realistic effect by daubing them with light blue acrylic paint, then immediately wiping the excess off the raised chrome details.

Revell's new kits fit together like a dream, although the Batmobile does need some filling around the wheel arches and on the underside of the rear fin. Despite this, these are superior models. The vehicles should have been joined by a vinyl 1:6 scale figure of Batman himself in action pose by the time you read this – a first release for the manufacturers in the vinyl medium. Modellers would do well to remember that Batman kits are a here today, gone tomorrow phenomena – enjoying a limited shelf life based on the popularity of the film – and are therefore likely to become collector's items, so snap 'em up now.

Keep the box in pristine condition with this one – it's virtually guaranteed to go up in value.

Coming soon

Pewter Star Wars figures
Various **Out now**
Cute little silvery 90mm collectables of everyone from Admiral Ackbar to Bib Fortuna. *DS9* characters available too.

Masked Rider figures
Bandai **Out now**
Assorted toys based on characters and vehicles from the Saban TV show better known by its Japanese name, *Kamen Rider*.

CLASSIC ENTERPRISE

Manufacturer: **Bandai**
Price: **Around £30**
Contact: **Any good toy/model shop**

Bandai has just released its best *Star Trek* "toy" yet – a new battery-operated original series Enterprise NCC-1701, with light up nacelles and four sound samples. To call this a mere toy, though, is to call *Star Trek* a mere TV series!

Push in the nacelles, pop the Enterprise on her Starfleet-emblem stand, add the authentic peel-off stickers and you have the perfect desk ornament. Four discreet buttons aft of the saucer operate the sampled sounds, each of which causes the nacelle caps to light up as you listen to "phasers," "bridge interior," "warp drive" and the ever-popular "photon torpedo." A *must* for collectors.

NEW MEDIA Reviews

"And if you've got the right kind of Mac or PC you can even bark orders at the thing..."

STAR TREK OMNIPEDIA

The complete guide to Star Trek on CD ROM

Format: **PC/Macintosh CD-ROM**
Price: **£49.99**
Publisher: **Simon and Schuster**
Available: **Out now**

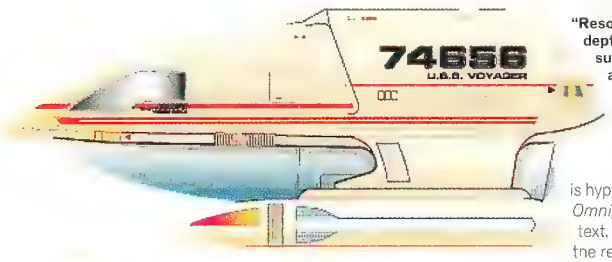
Text **Clive Parker**

Based on the two popular Trek reference books, *Star Trek Chronology: The History of the Future* and *The Star Trek Encyclopedia*, *The Star Trek Omnipedia* uses the familiar *Next Generation* LCARS computer interface to bring the contents of these books to your Mac or PC screen. And if you've got the right kind of computer you can even bark orders at the thing, thanks to voice recognition software. What next – built-in replicators?

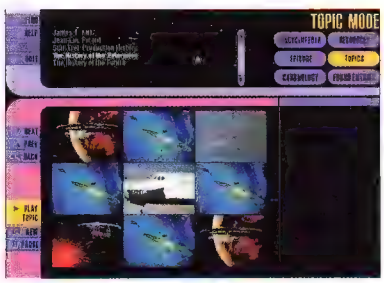
Everything in the books has been faithfully transferred to the CD-ROM, meaning you get over 1,500 images and 100 QuickTime movies, along with hundreds of charts, illustrations and thousands of pages of text. And if you have a 486/66 or Pentium PC, or a PowerMac or A/V Quadra, you can make use of the voice recognition system. It really is a bumper bundle of *Trek* information.

"Chronology" mode enables you to scroll through the entire history of the Federation and select subjects to view, starting five billion years ago. Here we see Kirk's first meeting with Khan in 2267.

There's one main view screen to access the five main modes of the *Omnipedia*, which leaves you with a feeling that a little more imagination could have been put into the interface. That said, the various modes do work very well, and the screen design is very good. A powerful search option enables you to enter any *Trek*-related term for a fast response, and the content of each mode is hyperlinked to other areas of the *Omnipedia*. When any word is in bold text, you can click on it to take you to the related items. And, if you select a subject from the encyclopedia with a related resource file, the famous Enterprise computer voice tells you. "There is a related resource associated with this item", and a link button pops up to take you there. Smart stuff.



"Resource" mode gives you more in-depth detail about the various subjects in the *Omnipedia*, such as an overview of the shuttlecraft used throughout the series and movies. This is a Type-8 Personnel Shuttle from *Star Trek: Voyager*.

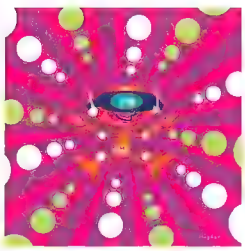


"Topics" mode is great. It plays a mini documentary about the topic you select, such as James T Kirk or Jean-Luc Picard, giving you a full history and background with a voice over commentary. Here's what the 'History of the Enterprise' topic looks like.

There's no question that the *Star Trek Omnipedia* is a superbly put together CD-ROM, packed with all the information and facts you'll ever need about *Star Trek* in all its guises. And, as a bonus, when you register you get free update discs dealing with the latest seasons of *DS9* and *Voyager*, and any new movies that come along.

Unfortunately, although the *Omnipedia* is undoubtedly an excellent product, it left me feeling vaguely disappointed and unfulfilled, much of that having to do with the uniform look of all the sections. Although I used it non-stop for around nine hours, it didn't really excite me – and I'm a die hard Trekker.

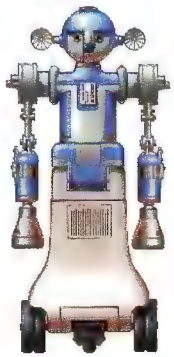
B+



The month in NEW MEDIA

ISAAC ASIMOV'S THE ULTIMATE ROBOT

Format: **PC CD-ROM**
Price: **£29.99**
Publisher: **Microsoft**
Text: **Mary Branscombe**



Watch your own robot rotate, swivel and disassemble itself.

Asimov's Laws of Robotics have defined virtually every robot that's appeared in SF since he first stated them in 1941. This CD attempts to tell you everything there is to know about such devices from prehistoric man inventing the lever to the state of play at the time of Asimov's death in 1992.

Featuring many of the great man's stories as well as clips from films like *2001* and *Alien*, plus research into creating the ultimate toilet-cleaning robot, the CD is a superb exploration of how science fiction becomes science fact, always relating back to Asimov's laws. The video clips aren't of a particularly good quality but the accompanying text is excellent.

The "Robot Toolkit" section supposedly enables you try out Asimov's principles by building your own robot, but it's sadly limited – you can make the arms, legs and head move but that's about all. With designs by Ralph McQuarrie (the guy responsible for the *Star Wars* droids) the Toolkit looks great, but is little more than a fun screen-saver creator. Spend your time on the excellent stories and carefully researched cross-references instead.

A-

NEW! SFX BACK ISSUES

Now you can order those classic early SFX issues you might have missed. Each one comes at £3.50 UK, £4.50 Europe and £5.50 Rest of World (all prices include p&p).

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SFX2 The legend continues! Includes: *Judge Dredd*, Gerry Anderson, Gillian (no relation) Anderson, *Proteus*, Jeff Noon and *Wonder Woman*. Code: **SFXB002**

SFX3 How could you miss out on a mag that features *Batman Forever*, *Congo*, *Babylon 5*, Harry Harrison, Alien War and Ed Bishop? Code: **SFXB003**

SFX4 *The X Files* Christopher Priest, *Species*, *Blake's 7*, *The City of Lost Children*, *Waterworld* and Adam (Batman) West. Code: **SFXB004**

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The pilot that spawned a modern legend. Darker and more cyberpunky than the series, it's an hour and a half of class TV SF that everyone should have on their shelves ☐

THX1138
(Letterbox) 15
Before *Star Wars*, George Lucas directed this bizarre Orwellian vision of the future, starring Robert Duvall. Packed with superb images, it's a forgotten classic, so, go on, refresh your memory.. ☐

The Stand
(Two tapes) 15
One hell of a bargain! Two tapes offering nearly six hours of superb Stephen King-based horror fare. When a deadly virus almost wipes out the human race the survivors face demonic forces. ☐

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COMIC Reviews

"These first two issues tell an exciting, if lightweight, story, with nice clear art and lots of action..."

SKULL KILL KREW

Shape-changing aliens make cows make burgers make shape-shifting humans...

Writers: **Grant Morrison & Mark Millar**
Artists: **Steve Yeowell & Chris Ivy**
Issues: **1, 2**
Price: **£1.85**

Text: **Matt Bielby**

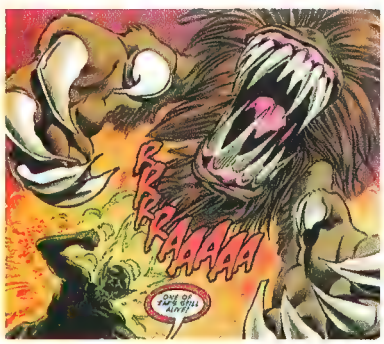
Grant Morrison and his co-writer Mark Millar like to step in and mess around with things. A few years back, they shook *2000AD* from top to bottom by introducing more shooting, a lot more shouting, and such controversial characters as footie hooligan "Big Dave." Morrison has, in the past, reinvented such DC heroes as *Animal Man* and *Doom Patrol*, while Millar is currently going through a little shakedown of his own over on Vertigo's *Swamp Thing* title.

Now, however, they're turning their attention to perhaps the biggest stage in comics – the Marvel Universe. Over the next few years, expect a bunch of mainstream Marvel comics from these two, some of them likely to rock Marvel fanboys in their shoes.

The first of these is *Skull Kill Krew*, created with the help of Morrison's old *Zenith* and *Invisibles* artist, Steve Yeowell.

Let's make one thing clear – this isn't comics as art. This is fast, rude entertainment, with the first couple of issues a rollercoaster ride that introduces our four (soon to be five?) heroes, and situates them firmly in the heart of the Marvel Universe. The storyline takes us right back to a very early issue of the *Fantastic Four*, when Reed Richards and co vanquished some shape-changing alien invaders - Skrulls – by hypnotising them into assuming the shape and thought patterns of common cows. Since then, the cows have been killed and turned into hamburgers... The result? Shape-shifting superpowers and a very short life expectancy, due to some alien disease, for a bunch of very angry young burger-eaters, the Skrull Kill Krew.

They're super-strong, they've got nothing to lose, and they want revenge on the rest of the



Much of the joy of *Skrull Kill Krew* lies in seeing a hipper side of the Marvel Universe, mixing old favourites like Captain America (left) with chicks like this...

undercover Skrull invasion force, who've apparently infiltrated pretty much every corner of the Marvel Universe.

These first two issues tell an exciting, if lightweight, story, with nice clear art, lots of action and plenty of potential. Best of all is the treatment of Captain America, the only major Marvel character to make a significant showing so far (the Fantastic Four and Avengers make cameos) in #2 – it's the most interesting version of Cap I've seen since his appearances in the Frank Miller's *Daredevil: Born Again* storyline. If you still quite like the idea of superhero comics, but don't find much out there to your taste, then jump aboard. Thrills, shock revelations, and interesting treatments of *all* the big Marvel heroes are guaranteed.

B+

Does this guy look familiar? He should do if you're a long time reader of Marvel comics...

Alan Moore's building up a largely new team for his run on *WildC.A.T.S.*, aided by the impressive Travis Charest...

WILD C.A.T.S.

Writer: **Alan Moore**
Artists: **Travis Charest & Troy Hubbs**
Issue: **21**
Price: **£1.50**

Text: **Matt Bielby**

I've not really enjoyed mainstream superhero comics for years, but now, quite suddenly, there are a handful around worth picking up. Alan Moore's currently the regular writer on *WildC.A.T.S.*, and, as was his habit years ago when he first took control of *Swamp Thing* and ushered in a new style of American comic book, he's reinventing things from the ground up here.

First off, what are the *WildC.A.T.S.?* Well, I could be wrong (I've only caught up on two issues so far), but it appears they're an *X-Men* style superhero team, whose old characters have either gone off into space or graduated to their own solo books. Moore has thus been left free to generate a new WildC.A.T. team all of his own. It's like reading *Giant Size X-Men* No.1, except the writ ng and the art is better...

The story, it turns out, is simple – two hanger-on heroes from the original 'C.A.T.S audition a bunch of replacements – and is told in a series of flashbacks, with hardly any captions and no thought bubbles. The reader thus has to do a fair amount of work – more than you'd expect from a superhero book. Cleverly, Moore manages to make the comic seem hip, well-written and mysterious, without anything much actually happening. Goodness knows how long he intends staying on the title, or how much control he's got, but I'll be around as long as he does.

A-

The month in COMICS

CAN MULDER AND SCULLY SURVIVE THE DRASTIC TRANSITION FROM TV TO COMIC?

THE X-FILES

Writer: **Stefan Petrucha**
Artist: **Charles Adlard**
Issue: **Annual #1**
Price: **£2.45**
Text: **Matt Bielby**

I've never read an *X-Files* comic before, and I doubt if I will again. And that's despite the fact that I like the TV show, and think this is a perfectly good comic book – a decent story, well-told, with a (kind of) satisfying conclusion.

The problem is, it's almost *too* faithful to the TV show. I like my comics to take advantage of the medium, not just tread the same ground as television...

The plot's a sort of ghost story – an archaeologist digs up what he thinks might be the remains of Eve, the primal woman from which all mankind is descended, but people start dying when the bits get transported back to America. Of course, it all eventually makes sense, and though the ending's a bit *Scooby Doo*, it's a fun romp. I just didn't find it very interesting, that's all...

B-

Mulder may not look *much* like David Duchovny, but so what?

Coming soon

Amazing Fantasy **September**
Glossy, full-painted high-end three-issue mini-series from Kurt Busiek, artist of *Marvels*, going over the first few days of Peter Parker's rebirth as Spider-Man.

Spider-Man/ Batman **September**
These two have never had a fight before. Now, presumably, they will. Bad guys the Joker and Carnage come along for the ride.

30 DAYS INTO THE FUTURE...

Coming next month in SFX

RAY HARRYHAUSEN

Jason and the Argonauts, One Million Years BC, Earth vs the Flying Saucers, Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger, Clash of the Titans, The Valley of Gwangi... The list goes on and on. Next issue we talk to stop-motion genius Ray Harryhausen about everything from *King Kong* to what he thinks of today's big-budget sfx spectaculars...

ROBERT RANKIN

The great secrets of the universe explained! How do you play allotment golf? Why is Brentford the centre of the universe? Who exactly *is* Hugo Rune? And what is the connection between Elvis Presley and sprouts? SFX speaks with the crown prince of comic SF about the *Brentford* trilogy, the *Armageddon: The Musical* trilogy and his new book, *The Garden of Unearthly Delights*. Rock and roll!

PLUS!

***Goldeneye! Johnny Mnemonic!* 40 years of BBC special effects (no, really this time)! And loads more...**

SFX6: ON SALE TUESDAY 24 OCTOBER.

DON'T MISS OUT!

TOSH Reviews

"In this format you get a chance to immerse yourself in a world that perfectly recaptures the feel of the comics – black humour, implied gore and all."

JUDGE DREDD: THE ORIGINAL ADVENTURES – THE DAY THE LAW DIED

Format: **Spoken word CD/audio cassette**
Distributor: **Polygram**
Producer: **Dirk Maggs**
Starring: **Gary Martin, William Dufris, Lorelei King**
Price: **£12.99 for CD, £7.99 for cassette**
Available: **Out now**

Text: **Dave Golder**

Pssst! Don't tell the BBC, but *Judge Dredd* doesn't really work as a series of six minute segments broadcast daily on Radio One. It's just too frenetic and noisy, and with stories – even fairly simple ones – stretching over 20 episodes it's hard to get a handle on what's going on.

So why not tell the BBC? Well, the main reason is because if they scrap the series, we'd be denied the much more listener-friendly CD and audio cassette versions that subsequently get released.

Take *The Day the Law Died*, for example. Sure, in this format it's still brash and confusing at times, but with headphones on and the lights off, or in the privacy of your own car (as opposed to in a busy office), you get a chance to immerse yourself in a world that perfectly recaptures the feel of comics – black humour, implied gore and all. It's a much better adaptation than the movie (there's even a superb in-joke at Sly's expense). An improvement on the messy Spider-Man radio series from earlier this year (the production team seem happier with an "English" subject), *The Day the Law Died* boasts a fine cast, and Gary Martin plays Dredd the way he should be played – Dirty Harry meets Dirtier Harrier. Only the inside Walter the Wobot grates.

At 20 episodes, the story of Judge Caligula taking over Mega City One and growing increasingly mad does tend to drag. But gimmicks like MCNN news broadcasts, chat shows, transvestite Judges and the casting for a movie version of the Caligula story keep things lively. Apart from a couple of places where the sound effects bury the dialogue, the production is excellent too. If you're partial to a bit of audio drama, you could do a lot worse than splash out a few of your hard earned creds on this.

B+

The month in TOSH

THE QUICK AND THE DREDD, PLUS OTHER NEW ODDITIES.

JUDGE DREDD TRADING CARDS

Manufacturer: **Edge Entertainment**
Distributor: **Creative Marketing Associates**
Price: **£1.25 per eight pack of eight**
Chaser card distribution: **Various – Brit-Cit Babes cards two per box; Metallic Black Death cards one in 1,400.**
Text: **Matt Bielby**

There are currently two sets of *Judge Dredd* trading cards on general distribution in the UK: The *Epics* set of 90 basic cards, plus assorted "chase" sub-sets, and the *Movie* set of 82 cards, plus chase sets. Some of the special chase cards are particularly fine – metallic and shimmering – while others are either mounted in solid blocks of acrylic. Very fancy.

The basic sets themselves are very much traditional trading card fare. *The Epics* concentrates on major, multi-episode *Dredd* storylines, like "The Cursed Earth", "The Judge Child Quest" and "Oz" – and thus provides Americans with a good instant guide to the world of *Dredd* – but suffers slightly, because British fans will have seen all the artwork before.

The *Movie* set is more impressive, using more unusual images, and subdivided into groups of nine which, put together, create mini-posters of characters like Judge Death and Judge Anderson.

While they're a bit of a funny business, trading cards – £1.25 for eight pictures can hardly be called the great value (it's more expensive than a copy of *2000AD* itself, which has at least 20 times as many pictures per issue, though admittedly it's not printed on such good quality card) – they're nice enough things to own, and great fun. For further details, call CMA direct on ☎ (01491) 847538.

C+

CONTROL GROUP SIX

Written by/starring: **Richard Bean, Andrew Clifford, Clive Coleman**
Producer: **Colin Swash**
Broadcast on: **Radio 4 (3 x 30 mins) in August**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

One of Radio 4's perennial problems, as it churns out yet another Footlights-esque comedy sketch show, is how to make it different from all the other Footlights-esque comedy sketch shows.

Sometimes the solution is to create a loose narrative framework. This worked (sort of) with *Star Terk II* (sic) a few years ago, and it works again (sort of) with *Control Group Six*, a paranoid fantasy with more than a hint of *The Prisoner* about it. The central character is Dr Heaven, searching through a weird, futuristic community for a dangerous renegade called Frank. Along the way he encounters a variety of oddball characters and situations, most of which owe a lot to Cambridge and Oxford revues.

Some sketches are important to the plot, others are completely irrelevant, but the structure is sufficiently strong to hold it together. By no means a classic, but a pleasant and imaginative little show.

B

CALENDAR OF DAYS THAT NEVER WERE

Artist: **Robert Ingpen**
Author: **Michael Page**
Publisher: **Dragon's World**
Price: **£5.99**
Available: **Out now**
ISBN: **1 85028 366 4**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

Based on the award-winning 1985 tome *Encyclopaedia of Things That Never Were*, this is an exquisite piece of work which has "Christmas present" stamped (metaphorically) all over it.

Each month has one large painting and half a dozen or so smaller illustrations scattered among the days, with short descriptions of what they are. The images are drawn from Greek, Roman, Norse, Eskimo and Aboriginal mythology, as well as fairy tales, legends and fiction. Very few relate to a specific day, but that's not really the point. Robert Ingpen's paintings show a definite Hieronymous Bosch influence, full of shadows and strange shapes, often merging into pseudo-Victorian montages. Many of the images are beautiful but not suitable for children, owing more to fairy tales as they used to be than the sanitised versions which are now standard fare.

Dragon's World maintain their typically high production standards which, combined with a purse-friendly price, make this extremely good value. Somebody you know will love this calendar. It may be worth dropping hints to them that you'd love one too!

A

Sales of the Uncanny

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WELCOME TO THE FIRST EVER SALES OF THE UNCANNY, SFX'S FREE READER ADS PAGE. IF YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING TO BUY, SWAP OR SELL, READ ON...

For Sale

ST: TNG videos for sale #1-48 & 50-70. Make me an offer for the lot. Call after 6pm ☎ (01743) 791100 or e-mail 100821.1304@compuserve.com. Address to/ask for Mark.

SF/horror books, magazines for sale. SAE to Richard Underwood, 16 Admaston Rd, Wellington, Telford, Shropshire TF1 3NG.

For sale/wanted: props, costumes, scripts, blueprints from major sci-fi/fantasy TV and films. *Doctor Who, Blake's 7, Star Cops,* Anderson, *Alien* trilogy, *Star Wars* trilogy, Stallone, *Indiana Jones,* James Cameron, *Star Trek* and much much more. Phone Mark on ☎ (01728) 830105 (evenings only please).

Movie mags for sale: *Empire, Starburst, Sterlog, Premiere, Cinescape, Sci-fi Universe,* also *TV Zone,* etc. Send wants list with SAE to: A Ali 14 Champion Grove, London, SE5 8BW.

Sci-fi/media magazines i e. *Empire, Starlog,* etc. Also books, fanzines, posters & more. All original material & in very good condition. Send SAE for list. Fiona Chalmers, 10 Marchfield Place, New Elgin, Elgin, Morayshire IV30 3YR.

Comics for sale, including *Dark Empire, Aliens, Batman* & more. All at just 20% of their value For a list, send an SAE to D Barsby, 32 Berry Hill Lane, Mansfield, Notts

TV Zone issues 1-59 & specials 1-14 for sale – cheaper than anywhere I've seen them advertised elsewhere. SAE for prices to: Richard Black, 7 The Lea, Wokingham, Berks. RG40 4YB.

Manga videos (VHS) volumes 1 & 2 of four-part series, *Kishin Heidan* from Pioneer. Unwanted competition prize. Never played. Comes with free bubblegum cards. £10 each. Phone ☎ (01364) 72778 and ask for Lee.

Electric guitar for sale. Sunn Mustang in red. Good condition. Suit beginner/intermediate. £100 ono. Matt Chang, 37 Chalfont Rd, Liverpool L18 9UR.

Comix collection: Over 600 *2000AD* (some still with free gifts). Date back to issue 127 (one or two earlier). Plus various spin-offs. *Judge Dredd* (American *Eagle* style), annuals, *Dice Man, Crisis,* plus *Warrior, Toxic* (complete), *Swamp Thing,* various indie first issues. Offers cheap for the entire collection or will break up. Plus approximately 100 issues of *Kerrang & Raw.* Paul Davies, 8 Mossdale Rd, Landgate Estate, A-in-M, Nr. Wigan, Lancs.

For sale: Personal collection of SF/fantasy merchandise. Includes *Doctor Who, Star Trek, Space: 1999, Batman, Buck Rogers & Tales of the Gold Monkey!* Books, posters, LPs, etc. For (very long) list, send SAE to Tim Neal, 73 Frances St, York YO1 4DP.

Doctor Who chess set for sale (with board/paperwork). Unused. Offers to Peter on ☎ (01244) 314535. Also T Baker board game/70s Dalek game. Ask for details!

***Blake's 7* vids for sale.** "Way Back" to "Blake.' Also *Sapphire & Steel* adventures 2, 3 and 6. Jason Constable, 9 Waveney Walk, Furnace Green, Crawley, Sussex.

Complete set of *Fear* magazine: 1 to 34. Issues 1, 2 of *Crisis* comic. Offers to Derek Stone, 7 Hewetts Rise, Warsash, Southampton, Hants

WANTED

Philippa Forrester, Janet Ellis, Lucy Benjamin & Andrea Boardman. Absolutely anything on any of these people videos, photos, cuttings, etc. Please send details to: Nicholas Hall, 12 Alderney Ave, Parkstone, Poole, Dorset BH12 4LG.

Wanted: Anything to do with *Quantum Leap.* Especially interested in getting hold of props from the series, i.e. a handlink. Also autographs, pictures, comics, etc. Please write to MW Anderson, 37 Laxton Close, Olveston,Bristol BS12 3EB

Wanted: Any Madonna magazines, posters, books, badges, key-rings, singles, calendars, sheet music, videos, everything considered Joel Marvin, 9 Thorn Tree, Close The Limes, Ravenstone, Leics. LE67 2JY.

Any information on *The X-Files* – articles, photos, etc. Would like to expand my "Files." All correspondence treated in true FBI confidence the truth is out there – trust no-one! Please write to Miss L Adams, 16 Macaulay Rd, Ipswich, Suffolk

NTSC laserdiscs wanted, good prices paid: *Day of the Triffids* (widescreen), *Fistful of Dynamite* (widescreen), *Hombre* (widescreen), *Our Man Flint* (widescreen), *Mysterious Island* (PSE), *Damien: Omen 2* (widescreen), *Gary Numan: Micromusic* (PAL). Contact Tony Parkinson, 3rd Floor, 74 Clerkenwell Road, London.

I'm a huge fan of David Lynch's bizarre television series *Twin Peaks,* and I am looking for any merchandise or related David Lynch products, especially the *Wrapped in Plastic* magazines. Willing to pay reasonable prices Carl Stanborough, 29 Ullswater Avenue, Richmond, Whitehaven, Cumbria

Desperately needed: First HMV *X-Files* box set. Cash waiting. Preferably in London area ☎ (0181) 292 2455 (ask for Chris).

Wanted: Any items on Peter Wyngarde. Please write to: Christine Whitnall, 9 Flamingo Crescent, Worle, W-S-M, Avon BS22 8XH.

Material wanted from Vincent Price films: *Abominable Dr Phibes & Dr Phibes Rises Again,* especially FOH stills, posters & articles. Paul Johnson, "Woodspring," Pump Corner, Bredfield, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP13 6DD.

Highlander memorabilia required by serious collector, props, foreign videos, unusual videos, books, magazines, posters, autographs, stills, absolutely anything considered. Contact J O'Callaghan, 62 Helena Crescent, Leicester LE4 2HA.

Doctor Who BBC videos to buy or swap from my collection. Write to: Ali Saleh, Room 116, John Harrison House, Philpot St, Whitechapel, London E1 2EW or phone ☎ (0171) 377 7000, ext: 2268.

FANZINES

Shades of Blue: a new fanzine about *Doctor Who* & everything else. No.1 includes the Ice Warriors, tragic comics, the 1985 hiatus, time travel, Superman, film censorship, plus art, fiction & the usual lots more. £1 payable to John Connors, 8 Henley Rd, Liverpool L18 2DW. If you only buy one fanzine this year, you probably haven't got much money.

New Words 4/5. High quality fiction with a fantastic edge. Send contributions. "Dog-eared" – *Interzone.* "Totally hip" – *Bypass.* £2.25/£10 for 5. SW Theaker, 19 Cholmeley Rd, Reading

Screen Scene – the cinema enthusiast's zine. Issue one looks at *Raiders of the Lost Ark.* Rare original press cuttings and more. £1 + A4 SAE to: Miss H Stephen, 80 Newbridge Hill, Bath BA1 3QA

RQC-1 – Really Quite Cosmic zine. Original SF/fantasy short stories plus *Tripods, Doctor Who, Bill the Galactic Hero.* £1.80: Gavin Wilson, 18 Worcester Drive, Didcot, Oxon. OX11 8UP

Out There: *X-Files* 'n' Weird Stuff. £1.50 plus 2nd class stamp. From Darren Powis, Camrose Walk, Cwmbran, Gwent NP44 4NN

China in your Hand – the *Frankenstein* fanzine. Films, books, comics, radio and TV. Issue three out now. *Film Review* said: "thorough & highly authoritative." £2 inc p&p. MJ Simpson, 80 Newbridge Hill, Bath BA1 3QA

TV Fuzz. Irreverent fanzine reviewing TV sci-fi/cult/comedy. *Babylon 5, X-Files,* etc. Contributions welcome. Send A4 SAE with two first class stamps marked "Autumn issue" to TV Fuzz, c/o AJ McKirdy, 20 MacDonald Walk, Balloch, Scotland, G83 8QH

Moonlit Fables issue one: Full report & reviews of Fantasm '95 festival plus much more. Cheques for £1 to: K Walters, 65A Marlow Rd, Anerley, London SE20 7YG.

New John Carpenter special issue zine: Big Trouble in Little Hatfield coming soon. For more information, send an SAE to Moonlit Fables c/o 65A Marlow Rd, Anerley London SE20 7YG.

Click & Hum. The storyzine for original *Alien Nation* stories & artwork. Now's your chance. For more information, send an SAE & RC to: Debbie Norton, 11 Morris Court, Springvale North, Victoria 3171, Australia.

Survival (30 A4 pages) Première issue, featuring *Trek, Doctor Who, Red Dwarf* & a whole universe of sci-fi classics. Plus: reviews, are you a sci-fi maniac, sci-fi A-Z, short fiction & more! £1 (cheque/postal order)/£1 coin taped to a piece of paper or card). Write to: Survival, 115 Dunbabin Rd, Childwall, Liverpool L16 7QQ. Write your name & address on a piece of paper or card. Cheques & postal orders payable to Graham Ryder.

It's not free in a cereal, it's not on a hi-fi, it's 20 pages long, & it's full of sci-fi! Schism! Send £1 cheque/postal order made payable to "SJ Fox" to: Schism, 77 Prince Rupert Drive, Tockwith, York YO5 8QS

KIMOTA magazine contains fiction, articles & comics strips covering SF, horror and fantasy. It is a 54-page A5 magazine published twice yearly by the Preston SF Group. The second issue contains contributions from Mark Morris, Bryan Talbot, Dave Taylor & many up and coming writers & artists. Available from 52 Cadley Causeway, Preston PR2 3RX, for only £2 (4 issue subscription £7). Please make cheques payable to Graeme Hurry.

Doctor Who. The Frame, multiple award-winning *Doctor Who* fanzine from the authors of *Doctor Who: The Sixties, The Seventies & Time Frame.* Copies of this A4 glossy colour and black & white litho printed zine which stopped publication in 1993 are still available. For a list of back issues, send a stamped, self addressed enveloped to The Frame 61 Elgar Ave, Tolworth, Surrey KT5 9JP.

PENPALS

I would like to talk to anyone whose interests include *Aliens, Star Wars, Batman, Star Trek, The Terminator, The Abyss, The Thing* (remake), *Close Encounters, Predator, Red Dwarf, The X-Files,* Clive Barker, Stephen King, Dean Koontz, SFX (of course) & definitely anyone who thinks that *Babylon 5* is the best sci-fi series ever made. Neil Colk, 3 Grristock Place, Norwich, Norfolk.

***X-Files* fan,** male, age 14 would like female penpal 14+ to chat about life etc. Photo please. Reply guaranteed. Tim Mewton, 4 Cowage Farm Cottages, Foxley, Malmesbury, Wiltshire. (P.S. I'm going to be a film director one day)

Sci-fi guy (15) seeks sci-fi girl for chatting to, and to possibly meet up. Andy Lukin, Temple Cottage, Wolvey, Hinck ey, Leics.

Star Wars, X-Files, Judge Dredd... If you are you obsessed with any of the above & are over 18 then contact me! Paul Link the Jagged Division, 9 Park Close, Kinlet, Bewdley, Worcs, DY12 3BG. All letters will be answered.

CLUBS

Newcomers Welcome! Join the *Alien Nation* Appreciation Society. Send an SAE to: Pete Chambers, The Tencton Planet, 110 Richmond St, Coventry CV2 4HY.

The X-Files; *ST: Voyager; Doctor Who; Magic Roundabout; Goodies; Press Gang; DS9; Ace of Wands; Game On; Eerie, Indiana* & many more. Cult classics, today's hits, the half-forgotten, the esoteric & the downright bizarre. It's all at the Liverpool Society of Cult Television. Monthly meetings at the St. George's Hotel, Lime Street. Entrance £2/£1.50 (concs) for a day of fun (11am-6pm, and into the night at the bar). Future dates: 16 Sep, 18 Nov, 16 Dec (Xmas party). For more details, please send an SAE. Thanx.

Clubs for *Lois & Clark & Babylon 5!* For more information, please send an SAE (stating which club you're interested in) to: Club info, 14 Champion Grove, London SE5 8BW.

ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha, the official *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* Appreciation Society. Magazine, merchandise, meetings. Established 15 years, still only £5, SAE to: 26 Northampton Rd, Croydon, Surrey CR0 7HA.

Exciting Films II: The Devon film-makers. We need actors, writers, directors, producers - in fact, anyone who's interested in making films on an amateur level. Send a short letter or postcard including your name, address, telephone number, what you would like to do, & any previous experience/specialist knowledge you may have to: Phil Stewart, 194 Withycombe Village Road, Exmouth, Devon. Tel: ☎ (01395) 272584.

Hi, my name is Darren MacLennan, I am a *Star Trek* fan, I am in several national fan clubs but there are no local clubs in this area. Anyone interested in starting up a *Star Trek* fan club in the North of Scotland (North of Perth) can contact me by phoning ☎ (01520) 722452 during office hours (9am 5pm), 7 days a week, or by writing to: "Trek" Enterprise, 1 Sage Terrace, Lochcarron, Ross-shire IV54 8XQ

South Yorkshire Telefantasia: South Yorkshire's première fan group for all fans of classic British and US telefantasy, & classic British TV, comedy, drama, variety, & radio comedy. Monthly meetings, newsletters, guests, outings. Membership free. SAE to: South Yorkshire Telefantasia, c/o 27 Wickersley Rd, Broom, Rotherham, South Yorks. S60 3PX

The Norwich *Doctor Who* & Cult Television Society. Location trips, quizzes, convention visits, film-making, group fanzine & annual fancy dress charity pub crawl! Weekly meetings every Friday in the Jurnets Bar at Wensum Lodge, Kings Street. Send SAE for more details to: Matt Buxton, Southlands, The Street, Ringland, Norwich, Norfolk.

The British Fantasy Society. For all the latest news, top quality fiction, speculative articles, fantastic artwork & more. Membership of the British Fantasy Society is open to everyone. Send £15 (UK) £18 (Europe), $32 (USA) or £23 (rest of world) which covers one year's supply of our bi-monthly newsletter & extra magazines. Send to the BFS (SFX), 2 Harwood St, Stockport SK4 1JJ.

Unofficial Channels! The best *X-Files* fan club ever. Cheap membership rates & when you join you receive an FBI ID card! Plus six bi-monthly newsletters. For information, send an SAE to: *X-Files* (SFX), 127 Carlton Rd, Gidea Park, Romford, Essex RM2 5AU. Appy soonI Issue two comes out September/October!

Highlander. There can be only one official UK Highlander appreciation society, and this is it – The Clan A fan club for the films & television series. UK membership only £5 for 4 quarterly newsletters. For more details contact Joe O'Callaghan, 62 Helena Crescent, Leicester LE4 2HA.

MISCELLANEOUS

Basically insane. Original SF/horror/fantasy stories. SAE for details to: Tim Lebbon, 48 St. David's Crescent, Newport, Gwent NP9 3AW

Dutch, international artist Robok (already has been published in USA) likes to work a lot! Keep him busy! Sci-fi, fantasy, horror, comics, storyboards, design, pre-production illos, etc. Free sample portfolio also for fanzines! For more information, please write to: Ronald Van Bokhoven, Hooghout 116, Breda, 4817 EE, The Nether ands.

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This Years Displays include :

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Also, there will be a ***Tony Hancock Exhibition*** *and we even have Waxworks of* ***The Beatles*** *on Display.*

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Dealer stalls available call 01462-683965 or 0860-355620

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15 Seconds To Comply Compo

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Give Us A Clute Compo

The legendary John Clute, co-author of the essential *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, has now compiled *Science Fiction: The Illustrated Encyclopedia* (reviewed on page 92). Lavishly illustrated and packed with chapters on every form of SF imaginable, it would normally set you back a wallet-worrying £25.

But SFX has five copies to give away, courtesy of Publisher Dorling Kindersley. Just tell us the name of the other main author of The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, and mark your entry Give Us A Clute Compo.

Hooray For Hartnell Compo

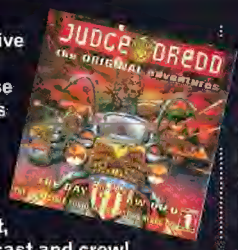
The Black T-shirt Company has chucked ten superb William Hartnell T-shirts our way, and, just to confuse matters, they're white! These stylish garments are normally only available through Vortex Events, so this is your chance to be the only Whovian on the block with a white 'un. Just tell us in which *Carry On* film William Hartnell starred, and mark your entry Hooray For Hartnell Compo.

Gerry Anderson: We're Not Worthy! Compo

Sir Gerry Anderson, Duke of Puppetshire and Crown Prince of brill TVSF, has done it again! *Space Precinct* is now out on video, and five lucky SFX readers can get their mitts on volumes 1 and 2, courtesy of Polygram Video. Just tell us the title of Gerry's first live action series (clue: It starred Stanley Unwin), and mark your entry Gerry Anderson: We're Not Worthy! Compo.

I Was A Teenage Klegg Compo

Having read our report on the *Judge Dredd* radio series on page 52, you may be curious to find out how similar to a Klegg Simo actually is. Polygram's Speaking Volumes label has therefore kindly sent us ten sets of both volumes of *Judge Dredd* to give away. And one of those ten winners will also receive an original *Dredd* radio script, signed by cast and crew! Drok! The question is: What was the name of the main East Meg attack ships featured in The Apocalypse War. Mark your entry I Was A Teenage Klegg Compo, and remember to say if you want your prize in the form of a cassette or a CD.



Send all your competition entries to:

[Compo name]
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Future Publishing
30 Monmouth Street
Bath, Avon
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Those rules and regulations in full

1. All entries should come on the back of a post piece of paper – one for each competition you e
2. No multiple entries.

...is Tuesday September...
...names will be published in the January ...e 22 December.
5. No c...
The ...

AND THE WINNERS FROM SFX2 ARE...

SPOOKSOME T-SHIRT COMPO
The film in which Christina Ricci starred with Cher was *Mermaids*. *Casper* T-shirts go to: Marcus Eves, Swansea; Robert Lawrence, Nottingham; Brian Morris, Essex; James E Rodgers, Wetherby; P Canavan, Bristol; Tracey Paddon, Cardiff; Nichola Fraser, Dundee; Melanie Shaw, London; Nigel Brown, Bridgend; Lee Woodage, Barking; Jim Barker, Basingstoke; Gordon Anthony Dunbar, Co. Durham; S E Iacott, Okehampton; C England, Bedford; Mr G Ditchburn, Hartlepool; R Plumtree, Ashford; Angela Winter, Morecambe; Bob Ford, Watford; Mr D Williams, Merseyside; Mr A R Hasley, Barking; Gina Robins, London; Dean Geoghegan, Eastbourne; N Hill, Cheltenham; Peter Adams, Bexleyheath; and D George, St Helens.

UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY COMPO
Gene Roddenbery's middle name was Wesley (snicker). Copies of *Inside the Mind of Gene Roddenberry* to: Mr G Palfrey, Fife; Robert Lawrence, Nottingham; Miss PA Aldritt, Wolverhampton; PR Jenkins, W Sussex; Michael Stirling, Dundee; Paul Stopner, Surrey; Nigel Mabry, Bridgend; Geoff Leone, Arbroath; J Brownrigg, Hatfield; Nicole Mayer, Poole; Mr SM Kibby, Boston; Mike Welch, London; John Warnock, County Downe; N H Hill, Cheltenham; James E Rodgers, Wetherby; Mr D S Oakes, Mid Glam; R Plumtree, Ashford; Bernard McConum, Dublin; and Lee Van Russel, London.

MEGA-RARE PROTOTYPE JAMES BOND COMPO
The film in which Peter Lorre played Dr Einstein was *Arsenic & Old Lace*. Videos of *Casino Royale* and *One Step Beyond* Vols 1 & 2, plus incredibly trendy Retro Video T shirts, to: Andrew Boulton, Leeds; N H Hill, Cheltenham; Paul Alexander Wells, Milton Keynes; Steven Geburtig, Cambridge; Mr M Jones, Totnes; Steve Moore, London; Michael Stirling, Dundee; Victor Hallett, Clwyd; Geoff Leone, Arbroath; Mr SM Kibby, Boston; Mr G Palfrey, St Andrews; W Henderson, London; J Lusher, Edinburgh; Jake Harvey, Roxburghshire; and Kriss Knights, Aberdeenshire.

COOLEST ROBOT EVER COMPO
What are you lot like? We asked you what 1957 film did Robbie the Robot also appear in, and a good 50 per cent of you said *Forbidden Planet*! The correct answer was *The Invisible Boy*. Videos of *Forbidden Planet*, *Westworld* and *Blade Runner* to: R Davis, Nottingham; Allen Shute, Merseyside; and Jo Marvin, Bromley.

LITERATURE, JIM, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT COMPO
The US comedy programme on which Bill Shatner took the mickey out of Trekkers was *Saturday Night Live*. Copies of *The Ashes of Eden* go to: Mr D Williams, Merseyside; Robert Lawrence, Nottingham; Mr A R Hasley, Barking; Nick Milton, Nottingham; Ms MM Wilmot, Sheffield; Mr S Shirley, Acton; John Nisbet, Fife; WJ Collins, Wilennall; Nicole Mayer, Poole; Darren Martin, Sudbury; Julie Atkin, Crawley; John Jenkins, Liverpool; Adam Morgan, Bristol; Miss PA Aldritt, Wolverhampton; John Warnock, County Down; N Hill, Cheltenham; Laurence Passmore, Reading; A Jenkins, Glasgow; Russell Law, Mexborough; and S E Iacott, Okehampton.

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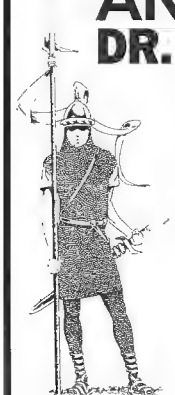

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PANOPTICON '95

HOTEL LEOFRIC, COVENTRY, 2-3 SEPTEMBER

THE DOCTOR WHO APPRECIATION SOCIETY BEGAN ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS WITH A TRIUMPHANT CONVENTION, THE CENTREPIECE OF WHICH WAS THE PREMIERE OF A RATHER SPECIAL CROWD-PULLER. **DAVE GOLDER** WAS THERE FOR THE MOMENTOUS OCCASION...

It can't be too many cons that can boast a world premiere in their programme. So it was something of a triumph for this year's Panopticon – the official Doctor Who Appreciation Society (DWAS) convention – that it could boast the first ever screening of *Downtime*, a professionally-shot-but-independent video production, using characters from the *Doctor Who* "universe". Backed by DWAS, *Downtime* reunites the Brigadier, Sarah Jane Smith and Victoria in a battle against the Yeti, and came to dominate the weekend.

Before the premiere everybody was talking about what to expect. After the screening, the one question on everybody's lips was, "What did you think?" Three panels were dedicated to *Downtime* – almost the entire cast and crew must have been interviewed on stage at one point or another, including director Chris Barry (also responsible for *Doctor Who* stories like "The Daemons" and "The Brain of Morbius").

The premiere itself took place at 5pm on the Saturday, and the time chosen was no accident. Andrew Beech – DWAS bigwig, *Downtime* associate producer and man-running-around-trying-to-organise-things-while-looking-worse-the-wear-for-worry-and-drink – put it best: "Not so long ago, just after five on a Saturday used to be a special time for me..." Everyone gathered in the hall knew exactly what he meant.

The highlight of this year's official Doctor Who Appreciation Society convention, Panopticon, was the premier of the video drama *Downtime*. Director Chris Barry (bending over in the picture on the left) and star Nicholas "The Brig" Courtney (below) were star guests at the con.

We'll leave the actual review of *Downtime* for next issue, but let's just say that the response was phenomenal. Some might say that a roomful of *Doctor Who* fans is hardly an impartial audience, but even the most cynical would have to admit that this is a hugely entertaining romp, boasting some superb scenes and great characterisation, especially for the Brigadier. Everyone involved in *Downtime* wasted no opportunity during the weekend to tell anyone who'd listen how proud they were to be part of the production, and how everybody should buy a copy, so they could raise enough money to make another video.

Rather overshadowed by all the *Downtime*-related shenanigans was an excellent interview with the much-maligned final (BBC) *Doctor Who* producer, John Nathan-Turner. Or, at least, the second half – conducted on the Sunday by ex-*Doctor Who Monthly* editor Gary Russell – was excellent; Steve Wickham's first bit the day before having been embarrassingly stilted.

Turner put up a spirited defence of his era, and even had the convention audience applauding the once-ridiculed 1993 Children In Need special set in Albert Square – no mean achievement. "Despite what you think of it," he argued, "the Friday night segment was in the top five

"Not everybody is lucky enough to get revenge on their childhood nightmares."

Sophie Aldred (Ace), on beating up Daleks with her baseball bat...

"I had to paint Marty Feldman's shoes with nail varnish and say, 'Dead cats turn me on'. My agent asked if it was a punchline, because you get paid more."

Caroline John (ex-companion Liz Shaw), on her first ever screen appearance.

most watched programmes of the year, and it even made the cover of *Radio Times*."

Other highlights included *The Dance of The Daleks* – Alan Marshall's early Super-8 attempt at special effects, set to the music of *Screen Test* – and a cracking panel by Sophie Aldred and Sylvester McCoy. The always entertaining Jon Pertwee, remarkably, managed to pull a few new anecdotes out of his cape after nearly 20 years of conventioneering too.

Low points? Well, I'm not convinced about The Hotel Leofric as a venue. Hot and stuffy and stuck right in the centre of one England's least impressive cities, it just didn't have quite the right feel for a convention (despite the '70s sci-fi look of the mirrored ceilings!), while the Dealer Room was almost insufferably cramped at times. How about a change of venue next year, folks?

Minor quibbles aside, the con was a big success. It's good to see *Doctor Who* fandom is alive and kicking, and kicking hard. Panopticon '95 is going to be hard to top – unless *Downtime* 2 gets made, or they have guests from the US *Doctor Who*, of course...

THE TIME MACHINE

Imperial College, London, 26-29 July

The range of events that come under the heading of "SF conventions" includes not only fannish bashes, such as Worldcon and Panopticon, but also serious literary conferences, like this one. Brian Aldiss reports from the HG Wells Society centenary symposium.

Enthusiasm for the SF of Mr HG Wells is greater than ever. That's the only conclusion to be drawn from a recent conference held in London on the centenary of the publication of his *The Time Machine* in 1895.

Critics, readers and academics came from all round the globe to Imperial College for four days in sweltering July. Imperial is Wells' old college, and in many ways carries on the Wells tradition – except that nowadays, mercifully, the classrooms are actually air-conditioned.

What made the conference most unusual was that it simply focused on one book – *The Time Machine* itself. 90 papers were given, not all of them too serious. The conference was organised by Patrick Parrinder, the president of the HG Wells Society, and his American counterpart, George Slusser, the doyen of big academic SF conferences in California.

Among the speakers were John Hammond (who has written several books on Wells) and myself, SF writer and Wells buff.

Nobody came away saying, "I never want to hear another word about that damned book." Rather it was, "I want to get home to read it again in the light of what I've learned."

A timely success!

FANTASTIC DAYS

Dates for your diary

Welcome to Fantastic Days, SFX's run-down of science fiction events. All cons listed here are non-profit-making affairs organised by fans, unless otherwise stated. Always enclose an SAE with enquiries. Con organisers – if your con is not here or your listing is wrong or incomplete, send details to Live!, SFX, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.

6-8 October 1995
Midcon 14
Star Trek con at Holiday Inn, Leicester. Write to: **8 Ennerdale Close, Oadby, Leicester LE2 4TN**

11 October 1995 onwards
Star Trek: The Exhibition
Display of props, costumes and sets at the **Science Museum, London.** Runs until 25 February 1996.

14-15 October 1995
Octocon '95
Irish national con at Roya Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire. Guests: Mary Gentle, Robert Holdstock, Kim Newman, James White, Anne McCaffrey, Katherine Kurtz, Michael Scott, etc. IRC to: **30 South Circular Rd, Dublin 8, Ireland or mmmchugh@tcd.ie**

14-15 October 1995
Brave New World
Star Trek con in a Welsh castle! Guest: Andrew Robinson. Write to: **Anthony Pugh, 2 Ferndale Road, Tylorstown, Rhondda CF43 3HB**

27-29 October 1995
Phoenix
Star Trek/media con at Apollo Hotel, Birmingham. Guests: Dave Prowse, Jeremy Bulloch, Jim Swallow... Write to: **112 The Normans, Wexham, Slough SL2 5TU**

27-30 October 1995
CultTV
Telefantasy con at Haven All-Action Centre, Great Yarmouth. Guests: Chris Carter, Brian Clemens, Kenneth Cope, Michelle Forbes, Bill Baggs, Ed Bishop, Annette Andre, etc. Write to: **PO Box 1701, Peterborough PE1 1EX**

28 October 1995
Talk by Stephen Baxter, Keith Brooke and Peter F Hamilton. **Peterborough Museum, Priestgate, Peterborough**

3-5 November 1995
Novacon 25
Annual SF con at Chamberlain Hotel, Birmingham. Guests: Brian Aldiss, Iain Banks, Harry Harrison, Bob Shaw... Write to: **Carol Morton, 14 Park St, Lye, Stourbridge, West Mids DY9 8SS**

3-5 November 1995
ReContanimeTed
Anime con at Grand Hotel, Colmore Row, Birmingham. Write to: **Martin Pay, 29 Langton Ave, Chelmsford CM1 2BW**

17-19 November 1995
Armadacon VII
Multi-media SF & fantasy con at Astor Hotel, Plymouth. Guests: John Carrigan... Write to: **4 Gleneagle Ave, Mannamead, Plymouth, Devon PL3 5HL**

18-19 November 1995
Assimilation
Star Trek/media con at Friendly Hotel, Milton Keynes. Guests: Jon Pertwee, Nicholas Courtney. Write to: **Stuart Banks, 77 Holyrood Ave, South Harrow, Middx HA2 8UD**

2-4 February 1996
Starbase '96
Star Trek con at Hilton National, Leeds. Write to: **Miss Carol Looby, 152 Otley Rd, Headingly, Leeds LS16 5JX**

10-11 February 1996
Star Fleet Ball
Star Trek con at Royal Bath Hotel, Bournemouth. Write to: **Anne Lindup, "Five Elms," Holtwood, Nr Wimborne, Dorset BH21 7DT**

29-31 March 1996
48 Hours in Space
TVSF marathon at Comfort Friendly Inn, Hull. Write to: **Hull Starfleet, PO Box 1701, Hull HU4 7YU**

5-8 April 1996
Evolution
47th British National SF Con (Eastercon) at Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow. Guests: Vernor Vinge, Colin Greenland, Bryan Talbot...Write to: **13 Lindfield Gdns, Hamstead, London NW3 6PX or bmh@ee.ic.ac.uk**

12-14 April 1996
Accelerate '96
Quantum Leap con at Radisson Edwardian, Heathrow. Guest: John D'Aquino. Write to: **78 Sterry Rd, Dagenham, Essex RM10 8NT or Accelerate@pbayliss.demon.co.uk or (01827) 64911**

2-6 May 1996
Warp Two
41st British *Star Trek* con at Cardiff International Arena. Guests: Robert Picardo, Nana Visitor, Walter Koenig, Mark Lenard... Write to: **69 Merlin Cres, Edgeware, Middx HA8 6JB**

24-27 May 1996
Inconsistent
SF humour con at Scotch Corner Hotel, Darlington. Write to: **Flat 1, 31 Saxon Rd, South Norwood, London SE25 5EQ**

28-30 June 1996
Discworld Convention 1996
Pratchett con at Britannia Sachas Hotel, Manchester. Guests: Terry Pratchett, Stephen Briggs, Josh Kirby... Write to: **PO Box 3086, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 6LD or discworld@cmacleod.demon.co.uk**

23-26 August 1996
Concorde
42nd British *Star Trek* con at Radisson Edwardian, Heathrow. Write to: **138 Crosslands, Stantonbury, Milton Keynes MK14 6DF**

25-28 October 1996
CultTV 1996
More TV fun at Haven Centre, Caister. **Same address as CultTV '95.**

26-27 October 1996
Who's 7 Strikes Back!
Doctor Who/*Blake's 7* con at Ashford International Hotel, Ashford. Write to: **10 Fillebrook Hall, Fillebrook Rd, Leytonstone, London E11 1AG or lexin@cix.compulink.co.uk.**

8-10 November 1996
Novacon 26
Annual SF con at Ibis Hotel, Birmingham. Guest: David Gemmell. Write to: **14 Park St, Lye, Stourbridge, West Mids DY9 8SS**

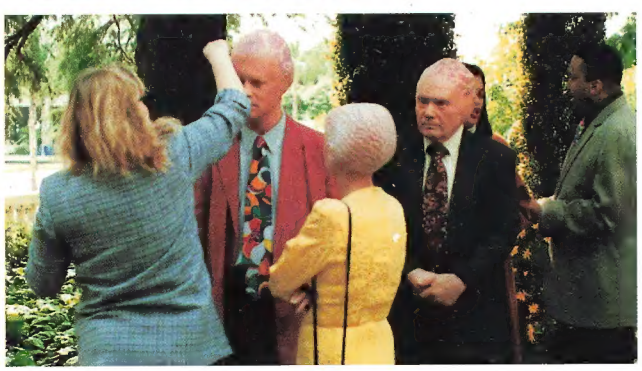
28-31 March 1997
Intervention
The '97 Eastercon. Guests: Brian Aldiss, Octavia Butler, Jon Bing, David Langford. Write to: **12 Crowsbury Close, Emsworth, Hants PO10 7TS**

22-25 August 1997
Terok Nor
44th British *Star Trek* con at – yes, once again! – the perennially popular Radisson Edwardian, Heathrow. Write to: **43 Eastern Ave, Polegate, East Sussex BN26 6HG**

ALIEN NATION

AT LEAST ONE VISITOR TO THE SFX OFFICE THIS MONTH TOOK A LOOK AT THESE PHOTOS AND ASKED, IN ALL SERIOUSNESS, IF ANY OF US HAD BEEN TO A WEDDING RECENTLY. WE CAN ONLY ASSUME THEY DIDN'T LOOK TOO CLOSELY. (OR IF THEY DID, ARE THEY TRYING TO SAY SOMETHING ABOUT OUR RELATIONS?)

Alien Nation fans were over the moon when the series, having been cancelled in 1990 after the end of its first season, returned as a 1994 TV movie called *Dark Horizon* (see the video review in SFX2). The feel-good ending to the movie was a Tenctonese wedding between two of the show's minor characters, Albert Einstein and May O'Naise (don't worry – these odd names are explicable in the context of the programme, and aren't just the writers trying to be wacky!). These behind-the-scenes snaps from the ceremony were taken by Karen Matthews, and kindly supplied by Pete Chambers of the *Alien Nation* Appreciation Society. © The Tencton Planet & Foxstar.



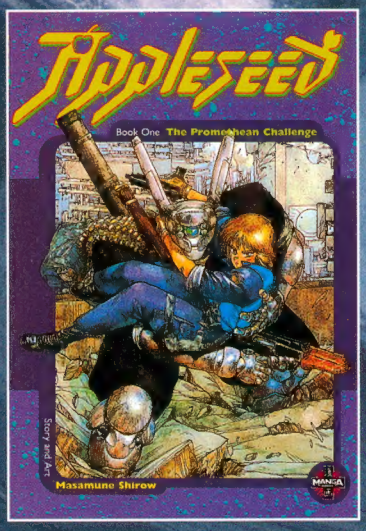
Top left: Eric Pierpoint (George Francisco), Michele Scarabelli (Susan Francisco) and Gary Graham (Matthew Sikes) relax between takes during the wedding shoot. Graham looks pleased, and well he might. He is, after all, one of the few regular members of the *Alien Nation* cast who doesn't have to wear a prosthetic Tenctonese head.

Top right: *Dark Horizon* director Kenneth Johnson (he's the one in the foreground with his back to camera) sets up a shot on the bridge in the Oriental garden where the wedding ceremony is due to be performed. The Tenctonese ceremony involves the bride and groom's symbolic souls being placed in a boat and floated down the stream.

Bottom left: Tenctonese extras receive a touch-up from a make-up assistant. The head prosthesis extends from the nape of the neck over the head to the eyelids. Before the pre-formed head-piece can be applied, the actor's hair is sprayed with glue until it is solid, so that the "scalp" doesn't wrinkle. The whole make-up process takes about two hours.

Bottom right: Kenneth Johnson (in black shirt) cast his wife Susan Appling (far left) as the Priestess who performs the marriage service for Albert and May. Both Susan and the Johnson's daughter Katie are named (backwards) in the Tenctonese lyrics to the programme's theme song: "Ei-tak-nos-nhoj/Nasus gnilppa"! Now that's what we call an in-joke.

BREAKING THE BARRIERS



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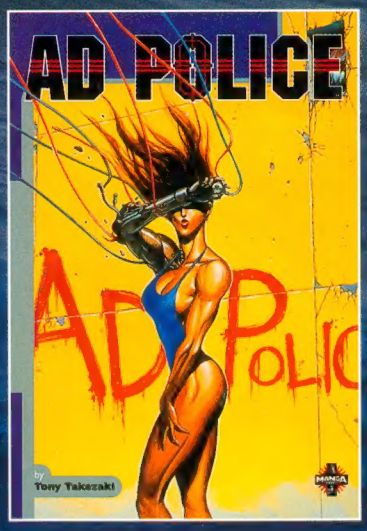

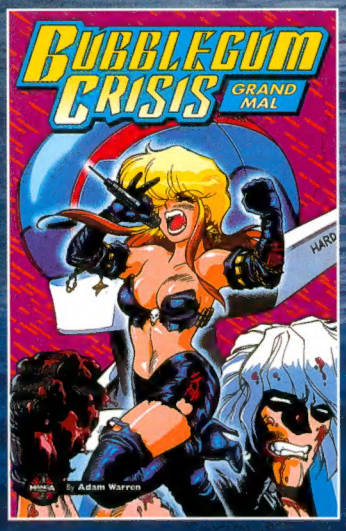

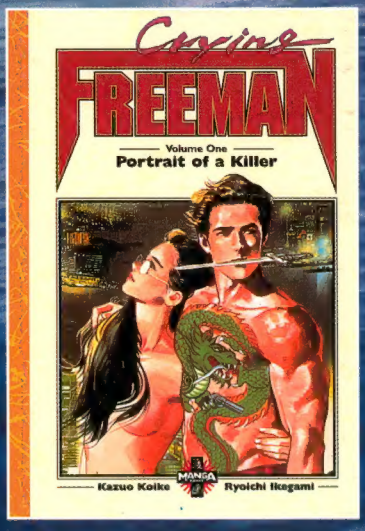

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